UNION COSSACK:

GENERAL JOHN B. TURCHIN'S

CAREER IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

by

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PREFACE

The beginning of the Civil War is now one hundred years distant, and in that time enough studies have been written about it to paper the walls of the Pentagon. There wouldn't seem to be anything left to write about it. But the war is perhaps America's most important, certainly its most tragic event, and controversy about it survives to demand continued study and research. It is doubtful that Americans can know too much about such a great, influential event. The events under consideration in this paper are an inseparable part of the war. They are relatively unknown, off the beaten path, but they are nevertheless important. They lend additional color and variety to the war, which make it that much more recognizable as a human event.

The protagonist of this narrative, John Turchin, is an example of the varied personality of the war. He was born a Cossack, was thus a representative of the new immigration of the mid-nineteenth century to this country from Eastern Europe. Names like Krzyżanowski and Mihalóczy were no longer unpronounceable exceptions to the monotonously West European character of the flow of immigrants, but indications that the nation was drawing significant strength

from new sources. But Turchin also deserves study in his own right, and it is wrong to assign to him any symbolic status or to ascribe any typical attributes to his personality. He was in fact a complex man who seemed to get into complicated situations. He has been handled rather badly by historians, who, intent on some other subject, drop him an inaccurate, insensitive footnote and pass on. He deserves better treatment--at least he merits this thesis.

This work is intended as a contribution to the "war effort" one hundred years after and as the story of a remarkable individual. It is thus certainly a worthwhile undertaking. Whether it is successful is another matter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In preparing this thesis I received assistance from many persons, and it is my very great pleasure to express my gratitude to them for it, meager recompense though it may be.

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The following people, in addition to Dr. Smal-Stocki, whose resources and contacts never cease to amaze me, were kind enough to allow me to use source materials or references, which were an indispensable part of this thesis.

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My thanks also go to Mrs. Helen Vrankin who typed the thesis in its final form.

Finally I express my warm appreciation to a very dear friend for his contribution to this effort.

Of course none of the above are in any way responsible for the opinions expressed or for any factual errors existing herein. I alone am responsible.

James A. Treichel

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CHAPTER I

A COSSACK BECOMES AN AMERICAN

Ivan Vasil'evich Turchaninov

Ivan Vasil'evich Turchaninov was born on January 30, 1822, in the city of Novocherkassk, on the main stem of the Don River in Russia. This was Cossack country--Novocherkassk was the capital of the Don Cossack Region, once an obstreperous, independent Cossack military state, which was absorbed and subjugated by the Russian Empire--and Turchaninov was a Cossack. Little is known of his family,[1] except that his father was a major in the Russian Army. After three years in an ordinary school, eleven-year-old Ivan entered a gymnasium in Novocherkassk. Then in 1836 at the age of fourteen he enrolled in the artillery academy at St. Petersburg. This was the beginning of a successful, eventful military career, which was to cover two continents.[2]

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[1]Material on Turchaninov before he came to the United States is not plentiful, so the story of Turchin's Cossack years presented here is vague in parts. There is research on Turchaninov now going on in the Soviet Union, and I hope that, when published, it will solve this problem.

[2]V. Chernorudyi, "Granitsa kazach'ego gosudarstva-Kazakii lezhit na ostrie kazach'ego pera [The frontier of

The Artillery Academy was an excellent school with a broad military curriculum. In addition to education in the art of shot and shell--mathematics, mechanics, gunnery, ballistics, and engineering--Turchaninov received training in the other arms of the service. Cavalry and infantry instruction were important parts of a cadet's studies. Thus the Artillery Academy offered more comprehensive training than, say, the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, which was primarily designed for instruction in engineering. Young Turchaninov graduated in 1841, after five years of study, and was posted with the rank of ensign to the horse artillery in the Don Cossack Region, where he served for nearly ten years. When a Russian army invaded Moldavia and Wallachia in 1848 as a preliminary move to intervening in the revolution in Hungary, Turchaninov, now a lieutenant,

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the Cossack state, Kazakia, rests on sharp Cossack pens]," The Cossacks Life, No. 100 (June, 1961), 26; Atlas istorii SSSR [Atlas of the history of the USSR] (3 vols.; Moscow: Main Bureau of Geodesy and Cartography, 1959), II, map 6; "John B. Turchin," Article from a Chicago Newspaper, February 6, 1866, in the Charles Harpel Scrapbook, Chicago Historical Society, p. 98; hereafter cited as Harpel Scrapbook; Alfred Mordecai, Military Commission to Europe in 1855 and 1856 (Washington, 1861), p. 21. Several dates have been given for Turchaninov's birth. For example, the date on his grave in Mound City, Illinois, is December 24. [W. G. Glaskow, "General I. V. Turchaninov" (unpublished article in Russian, 1961 or 1962), p. 3.] It should be the correct one. Nevertheless I have decided to accept the date given in the Harpel clipping, because it is apparently based on information Turchin himself supplied.

was sent with his battery to join the army in Poland protecting its northern flank. By this time his work must have been attracting favorable notice, for in 1850 he was selected to study at the Military Academy in Petersburg.[3]

The Russian Army was huge--the army alone which made the Hungarian campaign numbered over 160,000 men, with corp strengths of 45,000-50,000 and division strengths of 12,000-13,000 men--and it was the function of the Military Academy to provide picked officers with the necessary special preparation for staff or command positions with such large bodies. Among the subjects taught there were strategy, military history, topography, geodesy, and military statistics and administration. It was an elite school, the equivalent of the modern war or staff college, and it was a distinct honor for Turchaninov or anyone else to study there. He specialized in the area handled by the department of the état major, which in Russian and European armies was a separate section charged with handling matters of logistics, organization,

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[3]Harpel Scrapbook, p. 98; U. S., Veterans Administration, "Condensed Statement of Gen. John B. Turchin's Military History," Pension Application File WC 532315, Record Group No. 15, National Archives, p. 4.; Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar' [Encyclopedic Dictionary], ed. U. A. Andreevskii (45 vols., St. Petersburg: F. A. Brockhaus & I. A. Efron, 1890-1907), II, 203-204; Francis F. McKinney, Education in Violence: The Life of General George H. Thomas and the History of the Army of the Cumberland (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961), pp. 9, 14, 18-19.

and administration to relieve the field commanders of these not strictly military duties. The latter then had more time to devote to tactical and strategic problems. When he was graduated from the academy in 1852, Turchaninov added another distinction to his record. It was the award of a silver medal denoting the superior quality of his work there. This in turn led to the assignment to handle the duties of état major on the staff of the tsarevich, Grand Duke Alexei (later to become Tsar Alexander II), who commanded the Corps of the Guards. Turchaninov was now a second captain. It seemed certain that he had a brilliant future ahead of him in the Russian Army.[4]

But Turchaninov was foremost a Cossack and secondly a soldier; and however much his professional successes may have satisfied him, he was not capable intellectually or emotionally of renouncing his nationality or his bitterness at its treatment by the Russian government. Originally, in the seventeenth century, the Cossacks under their hetman

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[4] H. von Neidhardt, Bericht über die Kriegs-Operationen der russischen Truppen gegen die ungarischen Rebellen im Jahre 1849 [Report on War Operations of the Russian Troops against the Hungarian Rebels in the Year 1849] (Berlin, 1851), pp. 70-77, 94-125; U. S., War Department, Office of the Judge Advocate General, Statement of Col. Turchin, "General Court-Martial Proceedings in the Case of Colonel J. B. Turchin," KK 122, Record Group No. 153, National Archives, Appendix A, pp. 8-10, hereafter cited as "Court-Martial Proceedings"; Harpel Scrapbook, p. 98; Veterans Administration, "Turchin's Military History," p. 4.

(leader or chief), Bohdan Khmelnitski, had accepted the protection of the Muscovite tsar against the oppression of Poland and the Polish landlords in the Ukraine. Khmelnitski had led them in revolt against Poland in 1648, hoping to wring by force better treatment from the intransigent Polish gentry. But the war dragged on without any durable benefit to the Cossacks; and when Tsar Alexei offered them protection and support against Poland, Khmelnitski and the other Cossack leaders accepted. The formal pact between Russia and the Cossack territories was concluded in the city of Pereyaslavl' in 1654. In theory this Treaty of Pereyaslavl' gave the Cossacks autonomous, practically independent status. The connection with Russia was only through the person of the tsar.[5]

But events took quite a different course, as Khmelnitski and his lieutenants soon learned. They had wanted help in their struggle for freedom against Poland, "but Muscovy appeared to look upon Ukraine [the Cossack lands] as a new territorial acquisition for herself, over which she wished to gain complete control."[6] The Ukraine never saw independence again, for in the years and centuries after Pereyaslavl' the tsarist government deviated only for brief

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[5]Michael Hrushevsky, A History of Ukraine (ed. O. J. Frederiksen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), pp. 277-96.

[6]Ibid., pp. 276-77.

intervals from this policy of subjugation. For example, in 1708 Tsar Peter I destroyed the territorial integrity of the Don Cossack land, redistributing it among other Russian provinces, and arrogated to himself the right to select the Don Hetman. The other Cossacks suffered similarly, and in Turchaninov's era they retained only a few military privileges in recognition of their excellence as fighters. They were in fact perfectly fearless, ferocious horsemen, considered by some the best irregular cavalry in the world.[7]

There were naturally men, Cossack officers and intellectuals, who took pride in and drew strength from the Cossack past, who deplored the plight of their people and worked to improve it. One of these was Vasilii Dmitreevich Sukhorukov, a Don Cossack officer and historian and an acquaintance of Pushkin and Belinskii.[8] Sukhorukov was the leader of a group which had as its aim "broadest self-government" for the Don Cossacks.[9] Turchaninov joined

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[7] Ibid., p. 476; V. Chernorudyi, "Velikoe Voisko Kubanskoe [The Great Kuban Cossacks]," The Cossacks Life, No. 110 (April, 1962), 15; Mordecai, p. 18.

[8] Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya [Great Soviet Encyclopedia], ed. S. A. Vvedenskii (51 vols.; Moscow: State Scientific Publishing House "Bol. Sov. Ents.", 1956), XLI, 334; G. Svatikov, "Vystuplenie Atamana Ilovaiskogo v zashchitu donskoi avtonomii [Hetman Ilovaiski steps forward in defense of Don autonomy]," Kazak: Organ Kazach'ego Natsional'no-Osvoboditel'nogo Dvizheniya, No. 63 (August, 1961), 1.

[9] T. Starikov, "I. V. Turčaninov," Volnoe Kozactvo [The Free Cossack], V (June 10, 1934), 14.

Sukhorukov's circle in Novocherkassk while he was serving with the horse artillery. It took a certain amount of fortitude to associate himself with Sukhorukov, since the latter had been arrested several times and was definitely politically suspect. But Turchaninov was a young man, then in his twenties, and excessive caution was never one of his personal characteristics. Besides, the intellectual climate of the Sukhorukov group must have been refreshing to him compared with the parochial atmosphere of the army barracks.[10]

Turchaninov's feelings about the condition of his people were so strong that he wrote a poem about it in 1847, a long smouldering ode to his nation, which created quite a stir in Cossack intellectual circles. It was never printed--even fifty years later a writer explained that it was still too hot to publish because of "the bitterness of the resentment which he [Turchaninov] expressed at the relationship of Petersburg rule to the Don Cossacks."[11] However, it was widely circulated from hand to hand and was copied and recopied many times. But poetry doesn't win battles, and autocratic tsardom was a powerful enemy with many resources. The Poles and the Hungarians had tried open revolution and

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[10] Ibid., Chernorudyi, "Granitsa kazach'ego gosudarstva . . .," The Cossacks Life, No. 100 (June, 1961), 26.

[11] A. Karasev", "N. V. Kukol'nik na Donu [N. V. Kukol'nik on the Don]," Russkii Arkhive [The Russian Archive], 1894, Pt. 2, p. 591.

had paid in blood for the unsuccessful experience. With this gloomy example before them, the Cossacks and Turchaninov could not have been confident of winning their struggle.

Turchaninov's poem escaped the notice of Tsar Nicholas' omniscient police, but it is extremely doubtful that his Cossack political activities did. Yet there he was in a position of trust on the staff of one of the mighty. His politics apparently had no effect on his army career. In fact, when war seemed certain in 1854, he drew an assignment which indicated only the highest confidence and respect by his superiors. Army high command was worried about possible British naval activity in the Baltic Sea, and it therefore ordered Captain Turchaninov to go and reconnoiter the shore of the Gulf of Finland from the city of Narva to St. Petersburg, a distance of some sixty miles. Turchaninov was to find the spots most favorable to an amphibious landing--because of favorable physical conditions or weak defenses--and to reconnoiter all roads from Narva to the capital and select the best points at which to resist such a move, if it progressed inland. He was also ordered to designate the type of defense works to be built to protect these critical locations along the coast and roads. In March when the gulf was still frozen, Turchaninov and a naval officer set out on their journey, first proceeding along the coast. When they finished, their recommendations were read to Grand Duke

Alexei, who approved them and directed that they be carried out. Turchaninov was rewarded with a promotion to colonel, and when the Guards went to Poland in 1855, he went with them as Alexei's senior staff officer. He was thirty-four years old.[12]

Turchaninov Becomes Turchin

The assignment to Poland seemed to be simply another promotion. Actually it was more than that: it was Turchaninov's first step toward departure from the Russian Empire forever. It led also to marriage to one Nadine Lovov, apparently the daughter of a Russian officer stationed in Poland and a strong character for certain. She was firm and outspoken in her convictions and was accustomed to act upon them. She had served as a sort of mother-image-executive officer in her father's command, as she later did in her husband's. She was thus, like Turchaninov, a product of army life. On May 10, 1856, she and he were married. She was then twenty-nine years old. This was about the time that Turchaninov finally decided to leave Russia, and it is likely that Nadine strongly supported this decision.[13]

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[12]Harpel Scrapbook, p. 98; Veteran's Administration, "Turchin's Military History," p. 4.

[13]Veteran's Administration, Letter from the Bureau of Pensions to Mrs. A. Anikouchine, July 29, 1932, Pension Application File WC 532315; Glaskow, "General I. V. Turchaninov," p. 3; Mary A. Livermore, My Story of the War . . . (Hartford, Conn., 1889), pp. 114-15.

But the final choice had to rest with Turchaninov himself. In Russia he could anticipate rapid advancement and wide recognition in a profession he enjoyed. If he left, this would be forfeited, and there was no guarantee that he would find a satisfying life abroad. But he was a moral man and, unlike so many professional men, he never deluded himself by divorcing his work from the end to which it contributed. In the past he had served in the Hungarian and Crimean campaigns, neither of them noble undertakings, and the way things were in Russia, he could only expect similar wars of aggrandizement and suppression in the future. He was equally pessimistic about the prospects of his people. He saw them and others oppressed, but he could see no effective way to help them. The time had come when life in Russia had become so distasteful to him that he could think seriously of abandoning it for a new start somewhere else. In 1856 he decided to leave Russia.

When the Crimean War ended in 1856, Turchaninov was ordered to go to Petersburg to prepare quarters for the Corps of Guards which was to attend the coronation of the new tsar, Alexander II. Instead of going there he wangled a one-year leave of absence by reason of ill health with permission to recuperate at Marienbad in Austria-Hungary. But once the Turchaninovs were out of the Russian Empire, they didn't stop travelling until they reached London.

There they mingled with the various national exile groups and met the famous Russian expatriate, Alexander Herzen (Gertsen). There were also American army officers, engineers preparing to make a geodetic survey in London, and they persuaded Turchaninov to come to the United States and work on it with them. They landed in New York in August, 1856. Unfortunately Congress, as Congressees will, failed to vote the appropriation for the survey. Hence the Turchaninovs were stranded, but they at least learned at first hand who controlled the purse in the U. S. government. Whether they were intrigued by this rather perverse example of representative government is not known, but they did decide to settle in America.[14]

Why America? It is not hard to guess. Turchaninov had left Russia to escape restrictive, oppressive government and the unpleasant life it produced. It was only natural that he should choose the country where individual liberty was enjoyed with the most unlimited expression. Sukhorukov had spent three years in Philadelphia in the 1830's, and he must have communicated his impressions of Jacksonian America to Turchaninov. In a letter to Herzen which he wrote in 1859, Turchin (Turchaninov) himself explained that he had

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[14]Harpel Scrapbook, p. 98; Veterans Administration, "Turchin's Military History," p. 4; James Fenton, "A Sketch of Gen. Turchin's life," MS Records of James Fenton, Nineteenth Illinois Volunteers, Pt. H, p. 2, Palmer Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

come to the United States to "look carefully at the only republic existing in our century, and to be satisfied in fact and by my own eyes of its high value."[15] He had seen the difficult position of the national exiles in London. They were all more or less revolutionaries who had kept their national identities and a tenuous connection with their homelands. But their contact with the mass of the British people surrounding them was minimal and their lives were as a result voluntarily restricted. On the other hand the United States offered, at the sacrifice of the immigrant's former identity, a wide spectrum of choice to any who would without reservation become part of its life. And to a man of Turchaninov's capacity for living, the right choice must have seemed obvious.

The Turchaninovs began their new life as farmers on Long Island, thirty-five miles from Brooklyn, New York. They quickly ran through the stake Nadine's savings had provided--even in the best of times farming is a financially hazardous enterprise, and 1856 was not the best of times and besides, neither Ivan nor Nadine knew anything about agriculture. After a year they sold the farm and moved to Philadelphia where John--his name was John Basil Turchin

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[15] E. Grot, "Russkii polkovnik v bor'be za osvobozhdenie negrov [A Russian Colonel in the Fight for the Freedom of the Negroes]," Novoe Russkoe Slovo [The New Russian Word], New York Russian Newspaper, May 2, 1960.

now--studied at an engineering college. In 1858 the Turchins picked up again and went west to a small town in southern Illinois called Mattoon. Mattoon wasn't much, but it was the West--a more wide open, less rigid society--and Turchin found employment there as an architect. The Turchins might have remained in Mattoon, but John was offered a promising job as a topographical engineer by a company with a future, the robust, expanding Illinois Central Railroad in growing Chicago. But Mattoon was the place where Turchin first put down roots in America, for it was here that he joined the Republican Party, beginning as association that was to last until his death. And it was the Republican Party of Illinois; the Turchins had found a state, a home, and though they left it several times, they always returned. In fact, each of them would live to draw a pension as citizens of the state of Illinois. Turchin immediately began work with the Illinois Central when he and Nadine reached Chicago. The year was 1859, the year of John Brown.[16]

The Turchaninovs had achieved a secure, satisfying new life. In his letter to Herzen, written from Mattoon, Turchin made some typically forceful comments about it. "I live by drawings and plans," he wrote. "I am an excellent draftsman and a very good painter, and generally a good

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16"Turchaninov-Turchin, President Lincoln's Brigadier," The Cossack Quarterly, I (Winter, 1962), 24.

drawer. And," he added proudly, "I am secure from want. . . . I thank America for one thing: it helped me kill on the spot a nobleman's prejudices and lowered me to the rank of an ordinary mortal." There is obviously happiness here, and a hint of relief. He was never an undiscriminating admirer of American society, but its freedom and openness, contrasted with life in the Russian Empire, seemed to exhilirate him. "I have been reborn," he went on--the words dance! "No work, no labor is terrible for me, no situation terrifies me. It is all the same to me, whether I till the soil, carry manure, or sit with great scholars of my new land and talk about astronomy."[17]

But this achievement exacted its own high price. The Turchaninovs were, when they arrived in the United States, square pegs, involuntary individualists isolated from their new neighbors by language and previous experience. The language problem didn't last, for they soon learned enough English to meet their daily needs. But the old ways of living died hard and the new ways were difficult to understand. The problem was in a way symbolized by the change of names. "Turchaninov" had to go. It was simply too big a mouthful for most Americans of the 1850's.[18] "Ivan Vasil'evich Turchaninov" thus became "John Basil Turchin." But the emotional effects of this change were more complicated

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[17]Grot, Novoe Russkoe Slovo, May 2, 1960.

than the mere act itself. The spirit of it discredited the past, called into question the value of the years in Russia. There were features of that past life which were dear to John and Nadine, and which they could not forget, which in fact they would carry with them to their graves. Hence, no matter how well the Turchins adapted themselves to their new life, and events showed them exceptionally successful in doing so, they would never shake all the traces of the old one or the pain of recalling it. These vestiges remained entwined in their memories, and at odd times they would pop to the surface with startling and, as it happened, far-reaching effects.

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[18] There is the story of Władimir Krzyżanowski. Krzyżanowski was a Polish exile who became a colonel in the Union army and served with distinction on many fields, including Second Manassas and Missionary Ridge. His close friend, Carl Schurz, claimed that Krzyżanowski's nomination to brigadier-general wasn't confirmed, because the senators could not pronounce his name (in English it sounds roughly like "Kshee-zha-nóf-sky"), when it came up in the Senate.--Ella Lonn, Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), pp. 233-234n.

CHAPTER II

TURCHIN AND THE NINETEENTH ILLINOIS

Turchin Takes a Hand in the War of the Rebellion

The Civil War came in 1861 and put an end to Turchin's career with the Illinois Central. He liked the railroad job. It allowed him to put his engineering ability to constructive use, for the railroad was one of the most important and typical contributors to America's growth. Furthermore in the course of this work Turchin met and mingled with people of considerable influence on the American scene. A few of these were Illinois Central executives George B. McClellan and Nathaniel P. Banks and a Springfield lawyer-politician named Abraham Lincoln, all of them destined to play leading roles in the war. But after Fort Sumter Turchin could not consider these benefits important. He stood four-square for the Union and against slavery--his experience in Russia had made him very clear on the subject of slavery. He had priceless military experience to offer to his new country in its time of desperate need. He had an opportunity to make himself known in his new land. Consequently he offered his services to the state of Illinois, and on June 17, 1861, Governor

Richard Yates commissioned him colonel of the Nineteenth Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry, then located at Camp Long, Chicago.[19]

How Turchin and the Nineteenth Illinois came together is an unusual story. The men of the Nineteenth and Twenty-First regiments wanted new colonels. Colonel Joseph R. Scott was only twenty-two years old, and the men of the Nineteenth thought him too young to lead them. He was a good man, however, and he became lieutenant-colonel and later became colonel of the regiment again. On the other hand, the Twenty-First Illinois had absolutely no use at all for its colonel, and he was transferred away. As replacements, Governor Yates made two men available to these regiments--Turchin and a somewhat seedy-looking ex-regular captain by the name of U. S. Grant.[20] The Nineteenth had first choice of the two men, and as one of the men explained it, "our officers did not know Captain Grant from a side of sole leather and elected Turchin as colonel." He added, "I

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[19]Veterans Administration, "Turchin's Military History," p. 4; U. S., War Department, Office of the Adjutant-General, "Field and Staff Muster Roll of J. B. Turchin," to August 31, 1861, Records Relating to John B. Turchin, Union Staff File, Volunteer Service File C-692-US-1862, Record Group No. 94, National Archives; these are hereafter described as "Muster Roll."

[20]Fenton, "How Some Regiments Refused Officers Appointed over Them," MS Records of James Fenton, Pt. E, pp. 1-4.

do not know that we were ever sorry."[21]

The boys of the Nineteenth were indeed lucky, for they were getting an extraordinary man. He was then thirty-nine years old and in the prime of life--five feet and six inches tall and weighing about one hundred and seventy-five pounds. He seemed excessively heavy, but the roundness of his head and body, the only distinctly Slavic feature of his physique, gave the impression of sturdiness rather than obesity. He was in fact very active, perhaps even nimble. His complexion was light, and his face was remarkably expressive. It was his eyes that one remembered. At one moment they were jolly blue dots dancing merrily above his beard; at another they resembled blue darts boring out of a mask of concentrated menace. Turchin's beard was light brown and he wore it as a beard should be worn. It covered his face below his nose, but it was not like the ridiculous bushy appendages that obscured so many of the physiognomies of the time. His hair had retreated somewhat from his massive forehead, and in summer a wide brimmed hat was a hygienic necessity for him because he was very sensitive to the rays of the sun.[22]

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[21] Ibid., p. 4.

[22] Veterans Administration, Sworn Statement of Mrs. Nadine A. Turchin, August 17, 1901, Pension Application File WC 532315, Record Group No. 15; Veterans Administration, "Turchin's Military History," p. 2; J. Henry Haynie, The Nineteenth Illinois: A Memoir of a Regiment of Volunteer

Turchin's slightly roly-poly appearance corresponded to a rollicking strain in his personality. His keen powers of observation uncovered and emphasized the humorous aspects of generally dull camp life. According to one of his soldiers his comments on these comic trivia, buttered by a thick Slavic accent, "caused much merriment among the men."[23] Once, while drilling his brigade in Tennessee, he caught sight of a rabbit scurrying across the drill field in front of the troops. Astonished and piqued by the sight of the little animal skipping across in front of the thudding feet of the soldiers, Turchin burst out, "H--l! dere goes a rabbit!"[24] This story is hardly hilarious--perhaps one had to be there to appreciate it fully. But it at least shows that, in addition to the personal enjoyment it gave him, it lightened the dreariness of camp routine. Apparently he

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Infantry Famous in the Civil War of Fifty Years Ago for its Drill, Bravery, and Distinguished Services (Chicago: Nineteenth Illinois Infantry Veteran Club, 1912), pp. 132-33; Theodore C. Smith, The Life and Letters of James A. Garfield (2 vols.; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1925), I, 229; James R. Gilmore, Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War (Boston, 1898), p. 127. There is at least one good photograph of Turchin in the uniform of a U. S. brigadier-general, which has been reprinted in several sources. See Francis T. Miller (ed.), The Photographic History of the Civil War (10 vols., New York: Review of Reviews Co., 1911), X, 91; Henry L. Kurtz, "John Basil Turchin, 'The Russian Thunderbolt,'" Civil War Times, III (August-September, 1961), 28; Starikov, Volnoe Kazactvo, V (June 10, 1934), 15.

[23]Joshua H. Horton, A History of the Eleventh Regiment (Ohio Volunteer Infantry) (Dayton, Ohio, 1866), p. 262.

[24]Ibid., p. 263.

left these anecdotes in his wake wherever he went.[25]

Turchin was, of course, not a buffoon. His list of credits in the Russian army shows that convincingly. On the contrary his training and experience in artillery, engineering, and administration at the corps level qualified him as one of the most highly educated soldiers in the United States. Throughout his life he was a serious and respected student of military affairs. But the pragmatic nature of his mind and its keenness and the sharpness of his eye prevented him from relying too heavily on theoretical maxims to handle concrete situations. There was indeed much essential material in military texts, fundamental principles of tactics, organization, and strategy, which a good officer had to master. But the Civil War was not a typical war, and its situations often demanded flexibility and split-second improvisational skill, which Turchin had, as his conduct in the war was to prove.[26]

Turchin's technical knowledge and ability were complemented by seeming indifference to danger--a commonplace attribute of the good soldiers in the war--or moral pressure. Courage is difficult to analyze. It springs from many sources and sometimes disappears as it came. Turchin's

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[25]Ibid., p. 264. For more stories see below, pp. 122-123.

[26]Francois de Chanal, The American Army in the War of Secession (Leavenworth, Kansas, 1894), p. 232.

seemed to stem from his self-reliance and iron will. He could indeed be a rock when the situation demanded it, but most often he was active, energetic, generating lots of drive wherever he went.[27] The historian of the Nineteenth Illinois described him with particular exactitude as "impulsive, full of energy, thought and acted quickly, and was rarely placed in any position where he could not muster resources to meet its emergencies."[28] And--Turchin had a temper. It was not like the nervous irritability of Sherman, for example, but rather resembled a volcano: it did not erupt very often, but when it did, everybody ran for cover.[29]

Turchin enjoyed music, was in fact an accomplished violinist. His digital dexterity was not confined to his ability as a draftsman. No doubt he put his customary energy into his playing; and if music expresses the player's personality, then Turchin's must have been all at once and by turns happy, forceful, explosive, altogether reflecting the remarkable personality that he was. The men of the Nineteenth were indeed getting the best.[30]

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[27]Horton, p. 162; Haynie, p. 133; Joseph G. Vale, Minty and the Cavalry (Harrisburg, Penn., 1886), p. 196.

[28]Haynie, p. 133.

[29]Examples of Turchin's temper are rare but remarkable. See below, pp. 55-56.

[30]Turchin to Mrs. George H. Fergus, Radom, Illinois, December 10, 1888, April 10, 1889, Joseph Sturge Johnston to his father, Elizabethtown, Kentucky, November, 1861, Turchin Collection, Chicago Historical Society.

Early Months with the Nineteenth Illinois

The Nineteenth Illinois itself had the makings of a good regiment. It consisted of healthy, intelligent, Midwestern youths, many of whom had been members of Zouave drill companies in Chicago before the war. In fact Companies A and B of the regiment were Zouave units mustered in en bloc. Lieutenant-Colonel Scott had been a first lieutenant in the famous U. S. Zouave Cadets of Elmer Ellsworth, who was a friend of Lincoln and the first Northern martyr in the war. The men from these Zouave companies had had practice in drill, and in this respect they were ahead of most of the volunteers at the beginning of the war.[31] "But," as one of them expressed it, "a more mischievous crowd was never gotten together in all the war. . . . They learned to forage very early and a rooster was not safe to come within a mile of camp at night."[32] If these boys were ever to become good soldiers, they would take some special handling.

They got it from Turchin. He gave them a stiff dose of drill right away, because some day their lives would depend upon their ability to perform it efficiently. There was a bewildering number of movements that a regiment had to

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[31]Haynie, pp. 45-46, 53.

[32]Fenton, "A True Story Told of General U. S. Grant," MS Records of James Fenton, Pt. B, p. 2.

be able to execute smartly to function as an effective fighting machine. There was the marching or fighting column, the fighting line, deployment of skirmishers, posting of pickets--and there was the musket. The .58 caliber Springfield musket, the most nearly standard infantry weapon in the Union army, was an improved, much more deadly arm than previous muskets, mainly because it was rifled. It thus fired its lead bullet, the Minié ball, farther and with greater force. Nevertheless it was still a muzzle-loader and nine separate movements were required to load and fire it. This was a complicated process, and the soldiers had to do it in the noise and smoke of battle. So Turchin took advantage of the month's stay at Camp Long and drilled the Nineteenth, and drilled it, and drilled it. Sergeant Haynie, the regimental historian remembered that, "From the start Turchin and Scott made it clear to every member of the Regiment that ours was to be the best in the service, if hard work could bring it about. . . . Indeed he pursued his endeavors in that respect in future whenever the Nineteenth was not on the march or fighting."[33]

On July 10 the Nineteenth was ordered to proceed by railroad to Quincy, Illinois, on the Mississippi River, and report to Brigadier-General Stephen A. Hurlbut who commanded Federal troops there. It left by train on July 11 amid the

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[33]Haynie, p. 139.

inevitable touching scenes of farewell and arrived in Quincy the evening of the thirteenth. Nadine Turchin was along. She would accompany her husband on all his campaigns. The next day Hurlbut ordered Turchin to cross the river and relieve the Twenty-First Illinois, commanded by that same U. S. Grant, which was strung out along the Hannibal and St. Joe Railroad from opposite Quincy to Palmyra, Missouri. Six companies of the Nineteenth went into camp at Palmyra and the rest were stationed along the railroad as far as Quincy. At this time not all the men were uniformed, and camp equipment and decent rations were lacking. This state of affairs led to Turchin's first brush with his superiors.[34]

He corralled about forty horses plus saddles and bridles and a quantity of flour and beef from secessionist people living around Palmyra. He needed the horses to mount some of his men as temporary cavalry for scouting purposes. He needed the food to feed his men who were not eating well at all. Unfortunately Turchin did not always issue receipts for the items his men took and it was claimed in some cases he took from people who supported the Union. (This is open to question. There were many "Unionists" in the border states who kept a Confederate flag in the cellar in case the fortunes of war brought Southern troops to their homes.)

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[34] Ibid., pp. 139-40; Veterans Administration, "Turchin's Military History," p. 4.

Promptly, July 16, Hurlbut sent Turchin a stiff note reprimanding him for what he had done. "The regiment must not be permitted to make friends into enemies," he wrote, "and injure the cause of the Nation while in its service by excesses and violence."[35] Shortly thereafter brash Brigadier-General John Pope preferred charges against Turchin for a similar offence, but Major-General John C. Frémont, top commander in the West at the time, disregarded them.[36]

It was typical of Turchin that he acted directly in an emergency cutting through established procedure. His reasons for doing so were military necessity and the well-being of his men, the two principles that were to guide him to the very end of his service. He had no sympathy for the Rebel civilians, and his experience in Russia told him that it was impossible for an army to subsist itself without drawing upon the country around it. Throughout his life he steadily opposed what he called the "guarding potato-patches policy" that was in force at the beginning of the war. This was the policy which aimed to disturb enemy property as little as possible, so that the Union army had to depend on

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35U. S., War Department, War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (4 series; 130 vols.; Washington, 1882), Ser. II, Vol. I, 186; hereafter cited as O.R.; all subsequent references to O. R. are to Series I, unless otherwise noted.

36Veterans Administration, "Turchin's Military History," p. 4.

long supply lines to the North for its food and equipment. Of this Turchin later wrote, "Only entire ignorance of the history of wars and the want of common sense could create such a policy in the heads of our leaders."[37]

Beside indicating Turchin's views with respect to enemy civilians and the problem of supply, this Palmyra incident suggests the unusual relationship that existed between him and his men. It went deeper than the ordinary comradeship developed through common endurance of hardship and danger. The best description of it is that it resembled the feeling of a father toward his children. Nadine was with the regiment doing her best to mitigate the roughness of army for the men. She and her husband had no children, and it appears that they found a substitute in these engaging young Americans. In Missouri the feeling was just forming, but even here there is the hint of a deep attachment between officer and men. Once during these early days the Nineteenth was camped on low, wet ground and was threatened with an epidemic of measles. After asking for permission to move the regiment to a more elevated area and getting no reply, Turchin moved it on his own authority and bought hay to make the men more comfortable. Nothing was too good for his "boys," as he called them.[38]

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[37]Turchin, Chickamauga (Chicago: Fergus Publishing Co., 1888), p. 11.

[38]Fenton, "A Sketch of Gen. Turchin's Life," MS Records of James Fenton, Pt. H, pp. 5-6.

It is at least certain that he knew how to handle the American volunteer soldier. There was nothing in his European experience that could help him in this respect, as the volunteer was a uniquely American product. The volunteer was in the army only "for the duration." He had voluntarily surrendered a very tiny bit of his independence and was very touchy if anyone tried to take more of it away. He was intelligent and a free man and a voter; and if he did not like the way things were going, he would write to a newspaper or to his congressman. He did not render obedience automatically, but reserved it for the officer who showed himself worthy of that trust. All in all, the volunteer was as tricky a problem of discipline as ever existed, and not everyone understood him. Foreign-born officers had the most trouble, but there were native officers who also had their share. Turchin by his intelligence and his excellent observative powers and his sympathy with them always kept the cooperation and respect of his men, all of whom were volunteers.[39]

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[39]There is a good presentation of the problem of the American volunteer in Bruce Catton, This Hallowed Ground: The Story of the Union Side of the Civil War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1956), pp. 19-27, 88, 174-75. For Turchin's relations with his men see Joseph W. Keifer, Slavery and Four Years of War; . . . 1861-1865 (2 vols.; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), I, 321-22; Joseph B. Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life (2 vols.; Cincinnati: Stewart & Kidd Co., 1916), I, 34.

The Nineteenth remained in Missouri until September, chasing small Confederate forces, destroying their camps, encouraging Union sentiment and the formation of loyal Home Guards, and occupying various important points. The regimental itinerary for this period included such places as Sulphur Springs, Pilot Nob, Bird's Point, Ironton, Norfolk, Jackson, and Cape Girardeau. On September 8 the regiment took boats from Cape Girardeau to Cairo, Illinois, and received orders there to camp at Fort Holt across Ohio River. Next day Grant, who was now a brigadier-general and in command at Cairo, ordered Turchin to take six companies to support the Seventeenth Indiana and Twenty-Fourth Illinois at Elicot's Mills, Kentucky, on the Mississippi. Nothing came of this move, however, and the Nineteenth and Twenty-Fourth were called back to Cairo. They were now ordered to travel east and join the Army of the Potomac in Virginia.[40]

Disaster at Beaver Creek

Washington needed two regiments in a hurry just then, and it tapped Frémont for them. He chose the Nineteenth and Twenty-Fourth, because they were handy and at that moment expendable. Perhaps Turchin's reputation as a difficult subordinate was a contributing factor. In any case the Nineteenth Illinois was the second to leave, following the

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[40]Haynie, p. 143; O. R., III, 480.

Twenty-Fourth northward via the Illinois Central to Sandoval, there switching to the Mississippi and Ohio line on September 17 for the first leg of the journey to Washington.[41] The orders to the train engineer were: "You are to make as good time as possible, with due regard to safety."[42] So it was that night that the Nineteenth Illinois was in Indiana chugging through the darkness at twenty miles per hour toward Cincinnati. Then suddenly disaster struck.

About forty-six miles east of Vincennes and a hundred and forty-three miles from Cincinnati, between the towns of Shoals and Mitchell, stood Trestle No. 48, a truss structure about sixty feet long and twenty feet high. It spanned the shallow stream known locally as Beaver Creek and, as far as anybody knew, it was in good condition. The Nineteenth was travelling in two trains. The first of ten cars carrying Companies A, B, C, D, and F, plus the regimental baggage passed over No. 48 at about nine o'clock. Seven minutes later the second train of eight cars, with companies E, G, H, I, K, and Turchin and his staff, plus Nadine and a few other officers' wives on board, reached the bridge and began to cross it. Suddenly, with a terrible lurch, amid the screech of tortured iron and the snap and crackle of

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[41] Ibid., 494, 498.

[42] Haynie, p. 144.

collapsing timbers, the middle section of the train plunged into Beaver Creek.[43]

The engine and tender got across all right, but the second car hit a broken rail only four feet from the west end of the bridge and bent it out of line. Car number three hit the displaced rail and flipped off the bridge, dragging down the first three cars behind it and setting off a whip-lash motion which derailed car number one and sent it wobbling off the track to come to a safe stop sixty feet beyond the bridge. Cars four and five slammed down hard on top of number three, "crushing it flat as a board," as one observer put it, and ripping the bridge to shreds.[44] Cars two and six were wedged against the abutments at either end of the bridge at an approximate forty-five degree angle. Turchin's car was on the track perched over the edge of the writhing chasm and the last car, containing more baggage, was undisturbed.[45] A Cincinnati reporter said, "A more complete wreck of cars was never known."[46]

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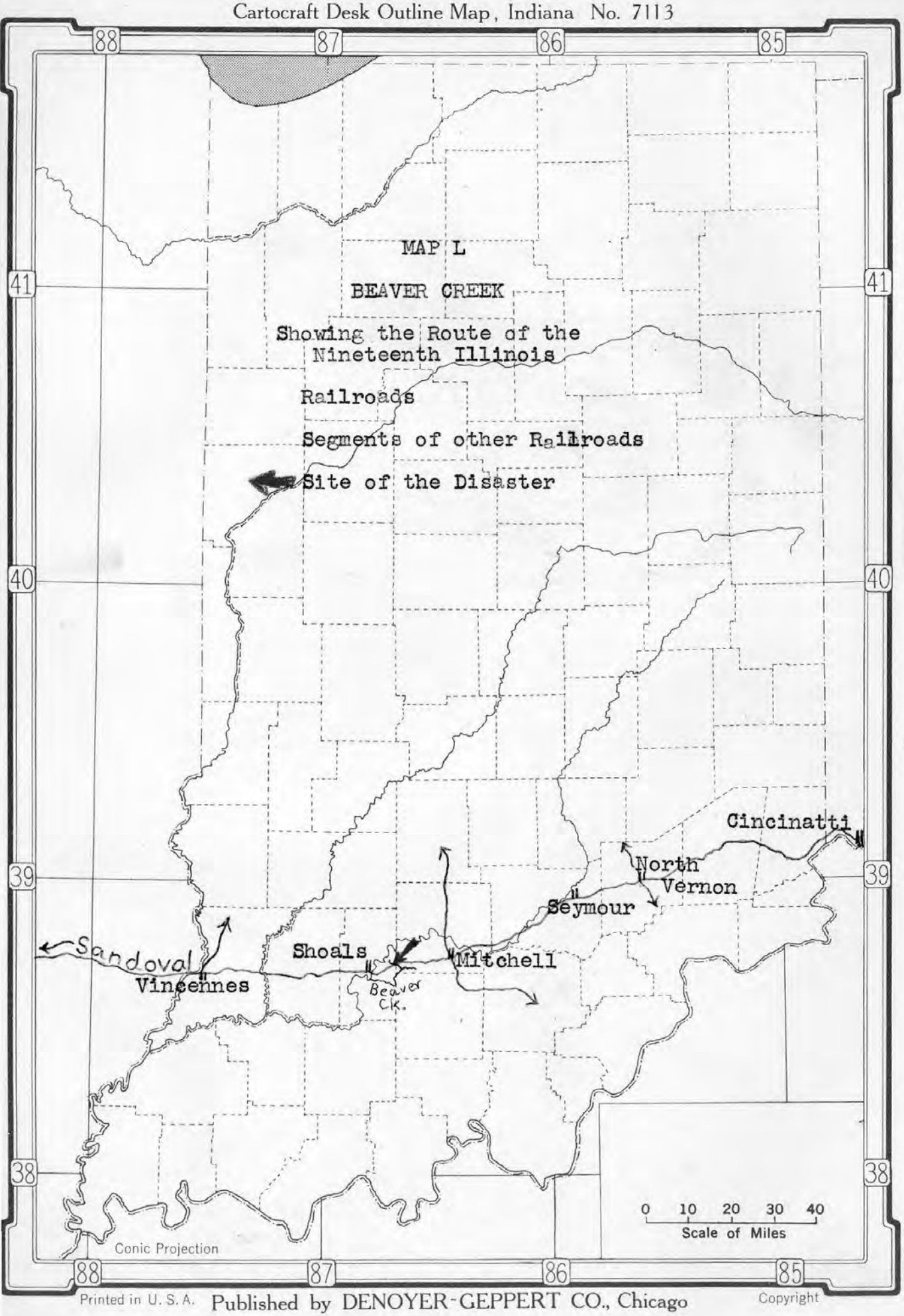
[43] Ibid., Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, September 18, 19, 1861.

[44] Article in the Cincinnati Daily Commercial Gazette, reprinted in Columbus, Ohio, The Crisis, September 26, 1861.

[45] Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, September 18, 19, 26, 1861.

[46] Ibid., September 19, 1861.

Cartocraft Desk Outline Map, Indiana No. 7113



Printed in U. S. A. Published by DENOYER-GEPPERT CO., Chicago

Down in the twisted carriages men were lying mangled and broken. Those still alive were piercing the air with horrible screams and groans. When the cars tipped over into the creek, the men inside were piled into the bottoms like beans in a jar. Many of these men were killed and seriously injured. Captain Bushrod B. Howard, who was in the third car, was squashed like a bug, and Second Lieutenant Clifton Wharton was caught by both legs between two car platforms and had to be hacked loose, each chop causing intense pain. Turchin started helping the sufferers immediately, organizing parties to go down into the creek and sending messengers for help to nearby towns. The uninjured men built fires on the tops of the creek banks and gingerly carried their unfortunate comrades to them. The two regimental surgeons and a lieutenant who had been a doctor in civilian life went among the victims giving them such treatment as their meager medical supplies would allow and supervising their movement to the fires. Nadine and the other two women tore their numerous petticoats into bandages--there were probably few of them left at the end--and assisted the physicians in every possible way.[47]

Right after the wreck the train engineer went to telegraph for help, and as news of the disaster spread, it

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[47]The Crisis, September 26, 1861; Haynie, pp. 144-45.

began to come in. The officers from the Nineteenth's first train, the lucky train, returned from Mitchell where they received the bad news. Three doctors arrived from Vincennes, and an express train from Cincinnati brought in others from Seymour, Mitchell, and other places. At 10:30 an emergency train left Cincinnati with five doctors, railroad officials, and rescue equipment on board. It picked up another doctor at Seymour and continued to the scene of the wreck. All the soldiers, dead, injured, and unmarked were put on this train and sent to Seymour. At Mitchell the people generously supplied some of the soldiers with replacements of clothing lost in the wreck. When the train arrived at Seymour, the townsfolk not only cleaned and dressed wounds, but provided food and more clothing as well.[48] Said one observer, "Each vied with the other to do the most."[49]

The trains left Seymour and proceeded to Cincinnati, arriving at about one in the morning. The dead were immediately taken to an undertaker, the injured to a hospital, and the others to a sumptuous banquet provided by some of the citizens at a Cincinnati warehouse. At five that morning the boys of the Nineteenth, dog-tired, trooped over to Camp Dennison and went to bed. They found the Twenty-Fourth Illinois in camp when they arrived. That day, the eight-

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[48] The Crisis, September 26, 1861; Haynie, p. 145.

[49] The Crisis, September 26, 1861.

eenth, was a dreary one for the men, and no less so for Turchin. By this time he was beginning to get an accurate count of his casualties, and the list was appalling. Out of two hundred and fifty men on the second train, twenty-five were killed, including a young drummer boy, and one hundred and fourteen were injured; the total of one hundred and thirty-nine was a twenty per cent loss from the seven hundred men that had started on the two trains from Sandoval.[50]

The dead were buried on the twentieth. The Nineteenth marched with its late comrades toward a distant cemetery. "Along the line of mournful march Cincinnati had taken on the gloom of many deaths," the regimental historian wrote years later, the sadness of the day still fresh in his mind, "and slow and solemn were the airs which several bands dirged for us and for those for whom we had sorrowed."[51] The soldiers didn't go all the way to the graveyard, but marched back to the railroad station to resume their journey to Washington, leaving the citizens to finish the task of burying and honoring the dead. However, at the station they received new orders to return to Camp Dennison. On the twenty-fifth they took steamers to Louisville and went from there via railroad to Lebanon Junction, thirty-five miles farther south. They

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[50] Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, September 19, 1861; Haynie, pp. 145-46.

[51] Ibid., p. 146.

left many injured men behind in Cincinnati hospitals.[52]

The crash of a common carrier is a common enough occurrence in American life today; but a hundred years ago it was a rarity, as mass transportation media were just beginning to develop. The Beaver Creek affair, with its converging rescuers, its press coverage, the quick reactions it provoked from the people of southern Indiana, bears a morbid resemblance to modern air and train tragedies. The promptness of the rescuers is worth noting. It was night, and most people were in bed, and yet in a remarkably short time aid was hastening to the scene from all across the state. It is heartening to see the people open their hearts to the unfortunate young men. It was a prompt, honest, compassionate reaction to a tragic emergency, and it exemplified the very best traits of the American people.

The accident of course had a powerful effect upon Turchin and the men of the Nineteenth. The common experience of this terrible catastrophe brought him and his men closer together. It set them apart from other soldiers, for, while many could boast of participation in sanguinary battles, few soldiers North or South could claim to have endured such a nightmarish freak of fate. The boys of the Nineteenth suddenly realized that it was a very big country, and that they

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[52]Haynie, p. 146.

were getting farther and farther away from home. In large measure Turchin stood between them and disaster, and Beaver Creek proved that he couldn't protect them completely. But even in the few months that he had led them they had come to rely on him and his ability to guide them successfully through the uncertain months ahead. Beaver Creek intensified this reliance. Turchin and Nadine met the men more than half way. Now and forever they were his "boys" and hers. An unbreakable bond had been formed between them that night at Beaver Creek.

If the men of the Nineteenth had known how much the wreck had shaken Turchin, their confidence in him might not have been so strong. Never before or after was he so anxious about the situation of his command. He sent a telegram directly to President Lincoln which revealed his emotional condition clearly. Beside the casualties in the wreck, he wrote, he had, "about one hundred (100) men sick. . . . Our uniforms shirts & shoes are worn out. The men not paid for two (2) months. Our equipments are sent . . . to Washington. The Regt is ordered to Louisville. . . . Which way," he asked almost plaintively, "shall we go."[53] All that he received for an answer was a message from the Adjutant-

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[53]Roy Basler (ed.), The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (9 vols.; New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), IV, 535n; ellipses in text.

General's office "to obey the orders of his general."[54]

One final effect of the wreck was the intensification of the feeling of Turchin and his men against the enemy whom they were fighting. As early as the night of the crash it was generally asserted that some person had tampered with the tracks on the bridge to cause an accident. The reporter of the Cincinnati Daily Commercial wrote in this connection, "not a soldier on the train, with whom we have conversed, save one, has any doubts that the bolts had been tampered with, and such, also, is the opinion of many railroad men and the inhabitants thereabouts."[55] On September 25 a committee of leading citizens and mechanics confirmed this belief, stating that the bridge had been structurally and materially sound, and that the wreck had been caused by a broken rail. Turchin and his men thus became firmly convinced that their comrades had been killed and maimed through an act of Rebel sabotage.[56] As a result they thereafter treated Confederate civilians, for the sabotage was not done by a soldier in uniform, with more than ordinary harshness. This attitude later brought trouble on themselves and many innocent people.

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[54] Ibid.

[55] The Crisis, September 26, 1861.

[56] Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, September 26, 1861.

Rest and Revival at Elizabethtown

The men of the Nineteenth were really "down" when they arrived at Lebanon Junction, and Turchin's biggest job was to get their spirits up again quickly. He, himself, had snapped back quickly from his own despond, and one of the men wrote at this time that, "the colonel uses every means to keep the attention of the men to their business."[57] There was constant drilling to improve the regiment and keep the men busy, give them no chance to think about the gloomy past.[58] He was busy even in the few periods of leisure time. "He encourages sports among the soldiers," the soldier continued in his letter. "Though he is a little fleshy, yet he played a few rounds of leap-frog & said he had not forgot [how] to play football & went off the parade ground carried by two small boys with one arm around each of their necks"--a hilarious sight, which showed that Turchin and his boys were ready to face the world again.[59]

At Lebanon Junction Turchin got into hot water once again, this time with bad-tempered Brigadier-General William Tecumseh Sherman. Sherman had taken over as commander in

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[57]Joseph Sturge Johnston to his mother, Camp Anderson, Kentucky, October 14, 1861, Turchin Collection.

[58]Haynie, p. 146.

[59]Johnston to his mother, Camp Anderson, October 14, 1861, Turchin Collection.

Kentucky, and he had received information that Turchin was harboring some fugitive Negroes in his camp. Sherman's destructive marches through Georgia and the Carolinas later in the war have obscured the fact that in politics he was essentially a conservative who had lived in the South for a time before the war. He was certainly not an abolitionist. Therefore he sent Turchin a stern message on October 15, saying in part:

> The laws of the United States and of Kentucky, all of which are binding on us, compel us to surrender a runaway negro on application of negro's owner or agent. I believe you have not been instrumental in this, but my orders are that all negroes shall be delivered up on claim of the owner or agent.[60]

Then, softening somewhat, he added a word of advice: "Better keep the negroes out of your camp altogether, unless you brought them along with the regiment."[61] Sherman was apparently content with this warning because Turchin heard nothing more from him on the matter of fugitive slaves.

On October 22 Turchin received orders to move his command to Elizabethtown, a few miles from Lebanon Junction. There it went into camp again, "and," noted the regimental chronicler, ". . . to drilling once more."[62] Afterward the men remembered the month spent at Elizabethtown fondly.

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[60] O. R., 307.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Haynie, p. 146.

The regimental camping ground was well situated--Turchin usually chose his campsites personally--the girls nearby were friendly, and morale was sky high. At Elizabethtown Turchin's boys shook off as much as they ever would of the depressing memories of Beaver Creek. There was more time for recreation at Elizabethtown, too, and Turchin had some novel ideas about how to fill it. Private Johnston described one of them to his father:

> The Col. is a lover of music & is opposed to the order, that no bands shall be enlisted after this. . . .
> He has engaged a music teacher as master of the [regimental] band & was present while the teacher tried the voices of the regiment to select a regimental choir of 50 voices. He told the boys who were afraid to try their voices not to be bashful but to act as if the regiment was one family.
> The choir is to act as a glee club, for amusement & instruction, & to keep the boys from a worse way of passing time.[63]

Turchin's fatherly attitude toward his boys is shown quite clearly in this passage, as is his way of maintaining their morale at a high level.

But the boys of the Nineteenth also had resources of their own by which to pass the time. The most outstanding example of their ingenuity was the regimental newspaper that they founded. It seems that the editors of the Elizabethtown Democrat had skipped out when the Nineteenth Illinois

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[63]Johnston to his father, Elizabethtown, November, 1861, Turchin Collection; italics mine.

approached, leaving a fine printing plant idle. The soldiers took this over, organized an editorial and printing staff, and soon issued the first number of the Zouave Gazette, of the Nineteenth Regiment Illinois Volunteers. Number One, dated Elizabethtown, Wednesday, October 30, 1861, was a six-column, two-page paper.[64] A box in an upper corner announced to its readers:

> The Zouave Gazette, published by the officers and members of the Nineteenth, will be issued as often as circumstances will permit. Editors: William B. Redfield of the Chicago Evening Journal and Lieutenant Lyman Bridges, Nineteenth Regiment. Publisher: Lieutenant William Quinton.[65]

It contained a variety of interesting items. There was a report of the regimental surgeon stating that sickness was at an all-time low, which was one sign of high morale. Several columns were filled with army orders, and for those inclined to the finer things, an original poem, entitled "Camp Life, With Variations," was included. There were also advertisements.[66]

The paper was a success largely due to the diligence of its managers. Beside the soldiers of the Nineteenth and the people of Elizabethtown, two Pennsylvania regiments at Lebanon Junction purchased copies. Advertisements

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[64] Haynie, pp. 147-48.

[65] Ibid., p. 148.

[66] Ibid., pp. 151-52.

carried some of the financial load. Sergeant Haynie noted dryly that, "between issues the assistant business manager 'worked' Louisville for advertisements."[67] That business manager was unquestionably an expert on high pressure salesmanship. Even so, it is difficult to understand why shopkeepers of Louisville would want to buy space in a paper most of whose readers might never come to Louisville. Whatever the reason, advertisements were bought and the Zouave Gazette maintained itself in a sound financial condition.

In addition to its other features and assets the Gazette could boast of an expert military columnist, Colonel J. B. Turchin. The founding of the newspaper probably surprised him--he never ceased to marvel at the intelligence and ingenuity of his soldiers. He was careful to encourage these traits, and therefore supported the newspaper enthusiastically. He contributed articles frequently and gladly, and so the columns were enriched by signed articles by Turchin on various military subjects--including regimental bands![68]

The leisurely days of the Nineteenth Illinois finally came to an end when Major-General Don Carlos Buell replaced Sherman on November 9 and began to prepare for a push southward. Buell came to Elizabethtown and reviewed the Nine-

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[67] Ibid., p. 147.

[68] Ibid., pp. 147, 152; Johnston to his father, Elizabethtown, November, 1861, Turchin Collection.

teenth Illinois and was so impressed with its discipline, that soon thereafter he elevated Turchin to command of the Eighth Brigade of the newly designated Army of the Ohio. This brigade consisted of the trusty Nineteenth Illinois, the Twenty-Fourth Illinois, the Thirty-Seventh Indiana, and the Eighteenth Ohio. The Eighth Brigade was assigned to Ormsby Mitchel's Third Division.[69]

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[69]Henry M. Cist, The Army of the Cumberland (New York, 1882), pp. 5, 22-23; Haynie, p. 159; O. R., VII, 460. Buell numbered his brigades consecutively for the army and not by divisions. Thus Turchin's was the Eighth Brigade of the Army of the Ohio.

CHAPTER III

THE NORTHERN ALABAMA CAMPAIGN OF 1862

Don Carlos, "Old Stars," and the March South

Amid the deluge of Civil War literature Don Carlos Buell remains innocent of reinterpretation. No latter-day champion has come forward to expose the subtleties, describe the sweeping breadth of his generalship. Thus he remains today what he was a century ago: a theoretical genius who had trouble understanding the political elements of military problems. He was born in Marietta, Ohio, in 1818, and was graduated from West Point in 1841. He had achieved distinction in the field in the Seminole War in Florida and in the Mexican War, during which he was brevetted several times for gallantry. After the Mexican War ended, he was assigned to the adjutant general's department, remaining there until the outbreak of the Civil War. In May of 1861 he was in California serving on the staff of Brigadier-General Edwin V. Sumner when he was called to Louisville to command troops in Kentucky. In December, 1861, as a major general, he organ-

ized the Army of the Ohio.[70]

Buell had completely mastered the details of army organization and administration. An officer who served on the staffs of Rosecrans and Thomas thought that, "for all the soldierly qualities that the troops of the later organization--the Army of the Cumberland--possessed, they were indebted in large measure to their first commander in the field, General Buell."[71] Buell's thirteen years' duty in the adjutant-general's department thus paid great dividends, but it was also responsible for the bureaucratic, slightly plodding way his mind operated.[72] There is a sentence in one of his messages to Buell which is really remarkable in this respect. It read:

> I would cheerfully wave all authority or credit on arrangements previously made by my junior to meet emergency, but a continued advance under his direction, while I was present there with an inferior force only intended for his support, would place me in a position which I have no idea you desire me to occupy.[73]

Even Halleck, who was no stranger to bureaucratic prose,

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[70] Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Allen Johnson (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), III, 241; Cist, p. 21; McKinney, pp. 121-22.

[71] Cist, p. 21.

[72] William F. G. Shanks, Personal Recollections of Distinguished Generals (New York, 1866), pp. 245-46; Charles T. DeVelling, History of the Seventeenth Regiment [Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry] (Zanesville, Ohio, 1889), p. 100.

[73] O. R., X, Pt. 2, 254.

must have scratched his head when he read this.

Buell was the most selfless, incorruptible of men. His strict code of behavior carried personal disinterestedness farther than even that of the modest Thomas. This attitude had its disadvantages, for like Thomas he was unwilling to broadcast his accomplishments above the confusion of noises emanating from the many conflicting egos in the army at the time. However his main problem was his inability to get along with important politicians and with his own soldiers. Enthralled by the starch and precision of the regular army he could not understand the free and easy ways of the volunteers who made up most of his army. As one writer has put it, "He knew moments of sheer horror occasionally when confronted with the civilian in arms in all his native rudeness."[74] Some of his actions seemed to have the specific aim of antagonizing them, the very men upon whom his success largely depended. For example, he adhered with insufferable stuffiness to the estimable policy laid down by the Lincoln government of scrupulously protecting the persons and property of Rebel civilians and subsisting his army entirely on regularly purchased supplies. This was the correct procedure outlined in army regulations which the bureaucrat in Buell revered, but it made practically everybody else livid.

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[74]Catton, p. 86.

Soldiers, officers, civilians, senators, and hard-eyed war governors like Andrew Johnson of Tennessee and Oliver Morton of Indiana heaped every kind of abuse upon him.[75]

The Army of the Ohio as Buell organized it on December 2, 1861, contained five divisions, to which a sixth was added in January, 1862. The commanders of these first six, brigadiers all, became well-known for one reason or another. They are worth noting: First Division, George H. Thomas; Second Division, Alexander McD. McCook; Third Division, Ormsby Mitchel; Fourth Division, William "Bull" Nelson; Fifth Division, Thomas L. Crittenden; and Sixth Division, Thomas J. Wood. Many of the soldiers in these units were ill-trained and worse equipped, and it took time to whip them into proper condition. When Buell reviewed the Nineteenth Illinois, he was no doubt gratified to find at least one regiment that looked more like soldiers than Portuguese guerrillas. Turchin soon brought the rest of his brigade up

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[75] Henry Villard, Memoirs of Henry Villard: Journalist and Financier, 1835-1900 (2 vols.; New York: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1904), I, 322; O. R., X, Pt. 2, 31, 253-54; XVI, Pt. 1, 8-9; "Instructions for the Government of the United States in the Field," [In effect during the Civil War] James Regan, The Judge Advocate and Recorder's Guide . . . Washington, 1877), p. 207; McKinney, pp. 121-22. A small sampling of opinion adverse to Buell may be found in John H. Rerick, The Fourty-Fourth Indiana Volunteer Infantry . . . (Lagrange, Indiana, 1880), pp. 248, 254; John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer, 1861-1863, ed. Harvey S. Ford (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1946), pp. 117-19. For newspaper comments see below, pp. 105-106.

to the standard of the Nineteenth, so that Ormsby Mitchel could consider himself lucky to have it in his command.[76]

Ormsby Macknight Mitchel had been out of the army for almost thirty years when the Civil War began. He was born in Kentucky in 1809, but his life is linked to the state of Ohio where he lived most of it. He went to West Point and was graduated in the class of 1829 along with such other later luminaries as Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston. In 1832 he resigned from the army to study law in Cincinnati where he was admitted to the bar. From 1834 to 1844 he taught mathematics, French, and engineering subjects at Cincinnati College, while also doing engineering work for various railroads to supplement his teacher's pay. He was the founder and director of the Cincinnati Observatory and had gone to Europe in 1842 to purchase its telescope and instruments. He brought home what was then considered the largest telescope in the United States. As time passed Mitchel became well-known as an astronomer, and he contributed greatly to public knowledge and appreciation of the science, which facts earned for him the inevitable nickname of "Old Stars" from his soldiers. After the war broke out, he received a brigadier-general's commission which was offered partly through the influence of his friend, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase. Since then he had

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[76]Cist, pp. 22-23; McKinney, pp. 121-22.

shown enough ability to rate the command of a division. Mitchel was a grizzled, somewhat windy fellow with a restless temperament. He was anxious for the chance to really distinguish himself, which he knew he could do. His subordinates found him very conscious of his dignity as a general, and woe to the soldier who didn't salute him.[77]

Mitchel's division consisted of three infantry brigades--Turchin's Eighth, the Ninth of Colonel Joshua F. Sill, and the Seventeenth of Colonel William H. Lytle--two batteries of field artillery under Captain Cyrus O. Loomis, Colonel John Kennett's Fourth Ohio Cavalry, and two companies of the Fourth Michigan Engineers. These were all volunteer units.[78] When Buell finally began to move southward, he put Mitchel's division in the advance; and Mitchel in turn put Turchin in the van of his division. So Turchin's was the lead brigade as the army advanced. His talents were gaining wider recognition.[79]

Buell's first real obstacle was Bowling Green, Ken-

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[77]F. A. Mitchel, Ormsby Macknight Mitchel, Astronomer and General (New York, 1887), pp. 5, 23, 44-45, 56, 157, 193, 207; Beatty, pp. 98-99.

[78]In the Civil War all units with state designations were volunteer units. Those with the letters "U. S." following the unit number were regular army units. These latter comprised only a very small percentage of the Union Army.

[79]O. R., VII, 419; X, Pt. 2, 85; Cist, pp. 22-23; Haynie, p. 161.

tucky, but before he reached it, Grant's capture of Fort Henry on the Tennessee River at the Kentucky-Tennessee border on February 6 made retention of the place dangerous for the Confederates. Therefore Major-General William J. Hardee, in command at Bowling Green, withdrew his forces all the way to Nashville, but not before Turchin's men made a futile, exhausting march to cut them off. Turchin reached the north bank of the Big Barren River, opposite Bowling Green on the afternoon of February 14. All that Hardee had in the city by that time was a rear guard which was destroying stores the Rebel forces could not take with them. Turchin had no immediate way to cross the river and attack the Rebels, as the Big Barren was in a flooded condition and the two bridges in the vicinity had been burned. Turchin's scouts, however, dug up a large scow, an old, flat-bottomed affair, at an aged flour mill nearby, and Turchin used this to cross his troop that night. Loomis' guns laid down a sharp covering fire for the crossing. Turchin got his advance elements into Bowling Green at five next morning, but the last of the enemy had left in the night. He quickly set his men to putting out the fires in the city to save some of what the Confederates had tried to destroy. Then he sat down to wait for the rest of Buell's army to come up.[80]

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[80] O. R., VII, 419; Haynie, pp. 161-62; Stanley F. Horn, The Army of Tennessee (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), p. 99.

Buell arrived on the sixteenth and remained in Bowl-Green for about a week. His next objective was Nashville, important rail center and capital of Tennessee, which General Albert Sidney Johnston, supreme Confederate commander in the West, had decided to evacuate after Grant captured Fort Donelson on February 16. By the time that Turchin's scouts reached Edgefield, across the Cumberland River from Nash-ville, on the twenty-third, Johnston and Hardee with the bulk of their forces had left. Buell came up with Mitchel and Turchin next evening, and Mayor Cheatham crossed the river and formally surrendered the city. In the morning Buell's troops entered the city even as Colonel Nathan Bed-ford Forrest's Confederate cavalry rear guard was leaving. Buell concentrated the whole available force of his army at Nashville, and it took some time for all of it to arrive. Then on March 11, Major-General Henry Wajer Halleck, "Old Brains," was placed in top command in the West, and Halleck ordered Buell to march to Savannah, Tennessee, with the idea of eventually joining with Grant's army. Buell took the divisions of Thomas, McCook, Nelson, Crittenden, and Wood with him. A Seventh Division was organized in Kentucky under Brigadier-General George W. Morgan to operate in East Tennessee. Ormsby Mitchel's division was to move southward through Shelbyville and Fayetteville and secure the country along that line, and on either side to Pulaski and Decherd.

His objective point was the Memphis and Charleston Railroad in Northern Alabama.[81]

The March into Northern Alabama

Mitchel's move had solid military reasons behind it as a companion to Halleck's advance southward. If he could reach and cut the Memphis and Charleston, he would disrupt communication between the eastern and western Confederacy. And the Confederate army in the West depended upon munitions sent from Georgia to Chattanooga and thence over the Memphis and Charleston to Corinth. But many in Buell's army believed that the move's main purpose was to get Mitchel away from the main army. To be sure, his relations with Buell hadn't been the best, for Buell's slowness had prompted him to urge repeatedly that the army show a little more speed. But Buell was, if anything, above personalities. The real trouble was that Mitchel had angered McCook and Bull Nelson by his overripe confidence in his own capabilities. There weren't too many tears shed when Buell left Mitchel and his division behind in Nashville.[82]

Late in March, Mitchel started for Murfreesboro, the

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[81]Haynie, p. 162; Horn, pp. 99-104; O. R., X, Pt. 1, 71-72.

[82]Horn, p. 149; Chicago Daily Tribune, July 15, 1862; Whitelaw Reid, Ohio in the War--Her Statesmen, Generals and Soldiers (2 vols.; Columbus, Ohio, 1893), I, 605.

first point on his route south, Turchin again leading the way. His brigade contained the same regiments which it had had when it was organized: the Nineteenth and Twenty-Fourth Illinois, Thirty-Seventh Indiana, and the Eighteenth Ohio, 3,428 men out of the total division strength of 12,057 in March. The Eighteenth Ohio, after serving in West Virginia with McClellan in summer, 1861, was reorganized as a three-year regiment in fall. It had joined the Eighth Brigade at Elizabethtown. Its colonel was Timothy R. Stanley, a former Ohio state senator and very conscious of the fact.[83] According to John Beatty, who was closely associated with him during part of the war, "Father Stanley is slow, destitute of either education or wit."[84] But no one ever questioned Stanley's nerve, and he served creditably later in the war.

Géza Mihalóczy, colonel of the Twenty-Fourth Illinois, was born in Hungary in 1825 and served in the Austro-Hungarian Army until the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution in 1848, when he joined his nation in its fight against the Austrians and Russians. When the revolution was finally suppressed in 1849 Mihalóczy went to London where he soon married. He brought his wife to the United States and like Turchin, failed at farming and changed his name--to

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[83]Haynie, p. 163; Beatty, p. 122; Reid, II, 128, 130.

[84]Beatty, p. 237.

Mihalotzy. From 1858 he worked at the low task of a grave-digger from which he was liberated by the outbreak of the war. Mihalotzy organized a company of Magyars, Czechs, and Germans, named the "Lincoln Riflemen" with Lincoln's permission, a short time before the war; and when the Twenty-Fourth was organized, the "Lincoln Riflemen" became one of its companies and Mihalotzy its lieutenant-colonel. In the early months of the war the Twenty-Fourth saw service similar to that of the Nineteenth. Mihalotzy was raised to colonel of the regiment on December 24, 1861, and he remained at its head until a sniper's bullet downed him, February, 1864, in North Georgia. He died of the wound soon after.[85]

Mihalotzy opposed, as Turchin did, Buell's policy of tight restriction on foraging. In the retreat north through Tennessee in late summer of 1862 Buell still had strong provost details protecting the country through which the army passed. One day one of these patrols, seeing a goodly number of geese being carried in the ranks of the regiment, halted the Twenty-Fourth Illinois as it was about to go into

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[85]Eugene Pivány, Hungarians in the American Civil War (Cleveland, Ohio: The Cleveland Printing House, 1913), pp. 14-15, 33-34; Edmund Vasvary, Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes . . . , 1861-1865 (Washington: Hungarian Reformed Federation of America, 1939), p. 67; Illinois, Adjutant-General's Office, Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois (8 vols.; Springfield, Illinois, 1886), II, 300, 323.

camp for the day.[86] The commander questioned Mihalotzy about the birds and he replied, "My mens buy dose goose and by tam, dey eats dose goose. Twenty-Fourth Heelenoy, Forward, March!"[87] Whether the geese were really bought or not is one of those little mysteries that are never solved. Hungarians tend to be passionate and intensely nationalistic and, as this story illustrates, somewhat abrupt, and it is one of the minor wonders of Turchin's career that his relations with those in his command were excellent, despite the fact that he had served with the Russian army that crushed the Hungarian Revolution.[88]

Turchin had less luck with the first colonel of the Thirty-Seventh Indiana. This officer, Colonel George W. Hazard, a regular army captain (regular officers in the volunteer service retained their regular army rank), made the mistake of questioning one of Turchin's commands when the latter was drilling the brigade in December, 1861. Turchin blew up and became somewhat abusive, so much so in fact that Hazard preferred charges against him for conduct unbe-

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[86]Fenton, No Title, Palmer Collection, Pt. G, pp. 7-9.

[87]Ibid., p. 9.

[88]Julian Kuné, Reminiscences of an Octogenarian Hungarian Exile (Chicago: Published by the Author, 1911), pp. 100-101.

coming an officer.[89] It was the second time that charges had been preferred against Turchin, and as in the first instance, nothing came of them. Hazard was a martinet, harsh in his dealings with his men and careless of their health. During one cold winter night at Bacon Creek twelve of them died in the regimental hospital. The medical director of the Third Division came to inspect the hospital and pronounced it "outrageous; worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta," which Hazard did not take kindly.[90] He ordered the doctor out of camp under guard.

An hour later Ormsby Mitchel rode in, had a short talk with Hazard, and left. "Soon afterwards," as the regimental historian, Sergeant Puntenny, tells it, "Col. Turchin and several of his staff rode into camp, and calling Col. Hazard out of his tent, placed him under arrest in the presence of a large number of soldiers."[91] It was certainly a humiliating experience for Hazard, but on the other hand--"after the removal of Hazard, the health of the Regiment

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[89] U. S., War Department, Office of the Adjutant-General, Charge and Specifications of Colonel George Hazard, Records Relating to John B. Turchin, Union Staff File, Volunteer Service File C-693-US-1862, Record Group No. 94, National Archives.

[90] George H. Puntenny, History of the Thirty-Seventh Regiment of Indiana Infantry Volunteers: Its Organization, Campaigns, and Battles--Sept., '61-Oct., '64 (Rushville, Indiana, 1896), p. 15.

[91] Ibid., pp. 15-16.

improved rapidly and discontentment disappeared."[92] And, observed Sergeant Puntenny, "Turchin was ever afterwards a great favorite with the Thirty-Seventh Regiment."[93] Lieutenant-Colonel Carter Gazlay took Hazard's place. But that first winter was never a pleasant memory to the men of the Thirty-Seventh Indiana.

Mitchel reached Murfreesboro on March 20, just after the Rebels had pulled out, leaving twelve hundred feet of two bridges burned behind them. These bridges had to be repaired before he could continue southward. In the meantime on the twenty-fourth he ordered Colonel Kennett and his cavalry with Mihalotzy and portions of the Twenty-Fourth Illinois and Thirty-Seventh Indiana and two of Simonson's six-pounders on a reconnaisance in force to the south and east. It was a three-day expedition, leaving at six in the evening on the twenty-fifth, and it found that there was no large Rebel force concentrated as close as Shelbyville and Tullahoma. According to Kennett, some of his riders just missed nabbing the famous Confederate raider, John H. Morgan, at Tullahoma on the twenty-sixth. It would have been great if Morgan had been taken, for he caused Mitchel a lot of trouble later. But at least Mitchel found out what he wanted to know: namely, that there was no one around to oppose his advance. Kennett and Mihalotzy returned to

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[92] Ibid., p. 16

[93] Ibid., p. 14.

Murfreesboro on the twenty-eighth, leaving some cavalry to guard the bridges east of Shelbyville.[94]

The two bridges at Murfreesboro were finally fixed, and Mitchel advanced to Shelbyville during the third and fourth days of April. He then began to pile up supplies there preparatory to moving on Huntsville, Alabama. Huntsville was on the Memphis and Charleston, fifty-seven miles from Shelbyville and in it were located railroad machine shops and sheds. With Huntsville in Federal hands the major link between Chattanooga and Corinth would be broken. To improve his chances of success Mitchel revived a plan of Buell's for a special diversionary bridge-burning expedition south of Chattanooga. He sent a Mr. J. J. Andrews with twenty-two volunteers to a point above Marietta, Georgia, well into enemy country, to capture a train and burn bridges northward to Chattanooga. This would prevent reenforcements from coming up rapidly from the southeast. But the expedition achieved no substantial results, except that for a few days the people of North Georgia were scared half out of their wits, and after an exciting locomotive chase, since celebrated in song and story, Andrews and his men were captured. So if Mitchel was going to take Huntsville he would

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[94] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 48-49.

have to do it without help.[95]

He would have to hurry. The success of the venture depended upon his ability to hit Huntsville before the enemy knew he was in the vicinity. To achieve the necessary mobility, he pared his attack force to one brigade--Turchin's--if anybody could move fast, it was Turchin--Kennett's cavalry and Captain Peter Simonson's Fifth Indiana battery. When the division left Shelbyville, Lytle's brigade remained, and at Fayetteville Sill's brigade fell out. Mitchel and Turchin left Shelbyville on April 9 and arrived at Fayetteville that night. While there they got the news of Grant and Buell's narrow, bloody victory at Shiloh, and at midnight, much encouraged, they pushed on along the road to Huntsville. At dusk they camped ten miles from that city. Cavalry patrols were out ahead sweeping up everything that moved to prevent any warning reaching the enemy. It was cold that night, and the men went to sleep on their arms, perhaps wondering what would happen in the morning and remembering that they were out alone in enemy country far from the main army. Had they heard it, the report that Mitchel got from a Huntsville Negro at midnight would have stood their hair on end. The slave's story was that five thousand

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[95] Ibid., 642; Haynie, pp. 163-64; Mitchel, 277-80, 292-93, 299; Robert C. Black III, The Railroads of the Confederacy (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), pp. 143-44.

Confederate troops had reached Huntsville on the ninth and they were just waiting for Mitchel to come![96]

If this was true, Mitchel's force was only about equal in size to that of the Rebels and, worse, the element of surprise was gone. In short the odds on the success of the expedition had suddenly become very long indeed. Mitchel consulted with his commanders and decided to go on because, though Negroes were very helpful, their information was often incredibly inaccurate. The men were roused at 2:00 A. M. and put on the road. They stretched silently and stifled profuse yawns, for absolute silence was the order. Only the occasional rumble of an artillery wheel betrayed their presence to a sleeping countryside.[97] Most of the time they marched at the double-quick, and Sergeant Haynie facetiously recalled that, "the result was the boys of the Fourth Ohio Cavalry had to ride some to prevent our over-running them."[98] They floated through the little village of Meridianville like so many wraiths. "Its people were buried in sleep," said one officer, "not a light or head appeared at a window."[99]

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[96] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 641-42; Mitchel, pp. 278-81; Haynie, p. 164.

[97] Mitchel, pp. 282-83.

[98] Haynie, p. 165.

[99] Mitchel, p. 283.

Four miles from Huntsville two cavalry detachments with picks and crowbars peeled off into the fields to the left and right to circle around and cut the railroad and telegraph lines on either side of the city. Soon thereafter two citizens riding from Huntsville were taken. They completely contradicted the Negro's ominous tale, saying that there was no substantial Confederate force in the city and that the citizens were unaware that Federal troops were nearby.[100]

At four, approaching the point three miles from Huntsville where the railroad crossed the road, Mitchel deployed Simonson's guns to the right and left to cover the track. Sweating, the gunners struggled to hurry their pieces into position--and not a moment too soon, for here came a locomotive--but there it went, escaping to the east. A second engine was not so lucky. The guns boomed, the engineer was killed, and the engine was taken. Mitchel quickly secured the captured locomotive and took all the cavalry down the road toward Huntsville at a trot. When they reached the outskirts of the city, they broke into a gallop and charged with sabres waving and yelling like Indians--in true cavalry style. The sleepy inhabitants of Huntsville, peeking out of their houses, were properly frightened, and the town was taken without difficulty. Meanwhile the cavalry details had cut the telegraph wires and torn up track west of town. A

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[100] Ibid., pp. 282-83.

detachment dashed to the railroad depot and made some Confederate soldiers there prisoner, while another seized the telegraph office. It was not yet six o'clock. An hour and a half later Turchin marched in with the Eighth Brigade while Mitchel was counting his captures. They were indeed impressive: some one hundred and fifty Confederate soldiers, mostly from the Ninth Louisiana infantry, about eighty box, passenger, and flat railroad cars, about fifteen locomotives, the telegraph office and its apparatus, and two Southern mails.[101]

But the job was only half-done. The Rebels could move troops quickly along the Memphis and Charleston against Huntsville from either east or west. To hold the city and maintain the breach in the railroad, a good piece of the line on both sides of Huntsville had to be occupied. As soon as he was secure in Huntsville, he planned two expeditions for just this purpose. Soon after Turchin arrived, Mitchel ordered him to take a detachment on one of the captured trains and hurry to Decatur and, if possible, save the big 2,200 foot bridge over the Tennessee River there. At about six in the evening Turchin put several companies on board, mounted a cannon on a flatcar in front of the engine, and

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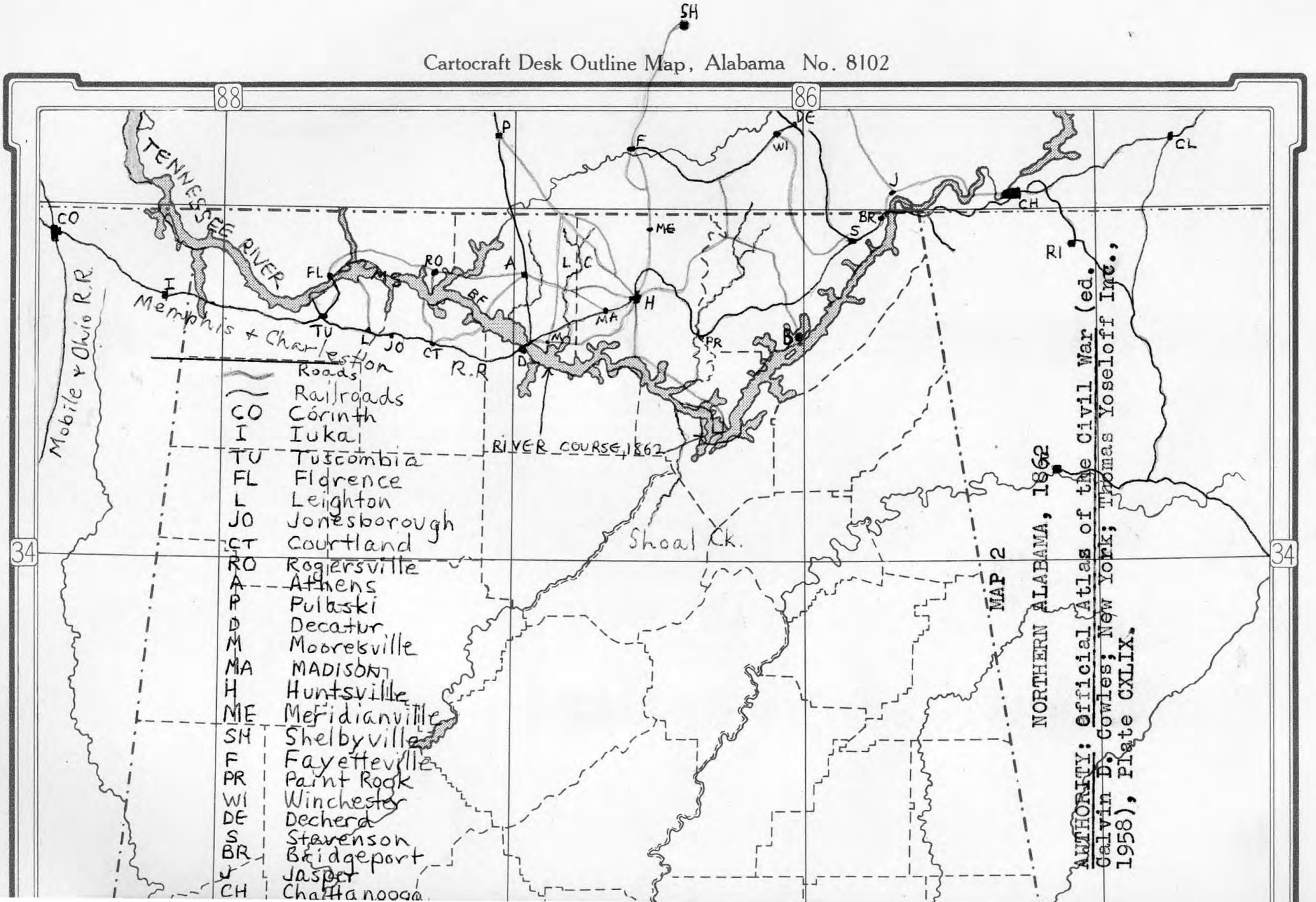
[101] Mitchel, pp. 283-85; Haynie, p. 165; Lucien Wulsin, The Story of the Fourth Regiment Ohio Veteran Volunteer Cavalry, ed. Eleanor N. Adams (Cincinnati: n. p., 1912), pp. 31-32; O. R., X, Pt. 1, 641-42; New York Herald, May 6, 1862.

Cartocraft Desk Outline Map, Alabama No. 8102



MAP 2

NORTHERN ALABAMA, 1862

AUTHORITY: Official Atlas of the Civil War (ed. Calvin D. Cowles; New York; Thomas Yoseloff Inc., 1958), Plate CXLIX.

with a train crew of Confederate employees and volunteers from the brigade raced off westward. Nearing Decatur he decided that it was too dark to proceed further and stopped for the night. Next morning he moved on and chased away a small Confederate force which attempted to burn the big bridge. Turchin's men saved the bridge. On the following day he occupied the town, and that evening the rest of the Eighth Brigade joined him.[102]

That same day, April 12, Mitchel with Sill and a similar force from his brigade captured Stevenson to the east, chasing off about 2,000 Confederates and capturing five more locomotives and a considerable amount of rolling stock. The Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad met the Memphis and Charleston at Stevenson, and in order to cut the enemy off from this junction Mitchel hopped back on his train, continued eastward seven miles and burned a one hundred foot bridge over a creek, and then backed up to Huntsville, leaving Sill in charge at Stevenson.[103] Back in Huntsville he happily reported his success to Buell:

> We have nothing more to do in this region, having fully accomplished all that was ordered. We have saved the great bridge across the Tennessee, and are

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[102] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 111, 641-42; Haynie, pp. 165-66; Cincinnati Daily Commercial, May 6, 1862; Mitchel, p. 285.

[103] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 641-42; Haynie, p. 166; Mitchel, pp. 286-87.

> ready to strike the enemy, if directed, upon his right flank and rear at Corinth.[104]

The War Department soon telegraphed him its thanks and President Lincoln promoted him to major-general. Mitchel in turn asked for brigadier-general's rank for his brigade commanders.[105]

Mitchel now set about making the operation of the Memphis and Charleston conform to the requirements of his situation and disposed his command to defend the vital rail line. Detachments were posted at various important points along its length. He wanted to be able to hold it and at the same time be ready to cooperate with Halleck's move on Corinth. (Halleck's large army in the movement southward from Pittsburg Landing consisted of Buell's Army of the Ohio, Grant's Army of the Tennessee, and Pope's Army of the Mississippi.) To get closer to Corinth he ordered Turchin to push further westward to Tuscombia, which was about sixty miles from Corinth by railroad.

Turchin left Decatur on the fifteenth, leaving only a baggage guard, and the next night at eleven he made Tuscombia. He immediately sent a force to hold nearby Florence and the bridges there. Then he pushed out pickets three or four miles toward Iuka and on the seventeenth sent a request to

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[104] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 642.

[105] Mitchel, p. 288.

Buell for rations, which the latter sent off from Pittsburg Landing on the nineteenth. Even as these rations, 100,000 in number, were floating up the Tennessee, Turchin began to feel pressure from enemy forces to the west. On the twenty-second some of the Fourth Ohio ran into Rebel pickets five miles from Tuscombia, and two hundred enemy cavalry tried to seize the bridge north of Courtland and thus cut off Turchin's brigade from Huntsville. On the twenty-fourth word came to him that a larger force was moving to get between him and Decatur. He passed this information on to Mitchel who reluctantly ordered him to withdraw to that point.[106]

As much as he wanted anything just then Mitchel wanted a large Federal force to come down and join Turchin for a thrust at Corinth and the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. But Halleck and Buell weren't sending any reenforcements, and Mitchel didn't want to lose Turchin and his brigade, so he ordered them back. Turchin left Tuscombia and met a part of Lytle's brigade which Mitchel had sent as support at Jonesborough. Before leaving there the next day Turchin had to burn 40,000 of the rations which had come in, but he brought the rest away safely. On the retreat from Jonesborough he lost about fifteen stragglers from the Nineteenth Illinois, which showed that he was moving fast, and three men of the

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[106] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 642, Pt. 2, 125-26, 133-34.

Fourth Ohio were wounded in a cavalry skirmish at Leighton. His advance reached Decatur that night and immediately began to cross the bridge. After his brigade crossed, the Tenth and Third Ohio of Lytle followed. All of the Third Division was now north of the Tennessee River. The Decatur bridge was burned.[107]

Sadly turning his back on Corinth, Mitchel now looked toward Bridgeport and past it to Chattanooga, the gateway to East Tennessee and Georgia. At Bridgeport were two bridges, connecting an island in the middle of the Tennessee; over these the railroad ran to Chattanooga. If Bridgeport could be taken, an advance on Chattanooga from it or via Jasper to the north was possible. Mitchel therefore concentrated Lytle's (less the Forty-Second Indiana and the Fifteenth Kentucky which were at Shelbyville and Fayetteville respectively) and Sill's brigades, two companies of the Fourth Ohio, and Loomis' Battery A, First Michigan Artillery at Stevenson on April 28 for a movement against Bridgeport. Next morning after a rapid advance and some adroit manuevering he chased the Confederates out of that city, saving the west bridge. The retreating Rebels had time to burn the other bridge.[108] But, Mitchel reported, "holding the main

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[107] Ibid., X, Pt. 1, 643, Pt. 2, 133-34; Beatty, pp. 104-106.

[108] Ibid., p. 106; O. R., X, Pt. 1, 642, 655-56; New York Herald, May 11, 1862.

bridge, we can cross to the other shore whenever it be deemed necessary."[109] He now held all of the Memphis and Charleston north of the Tennessee River, a more than one hundred and twenty mile stretch.

In the meantime Turchin, after crossing the Tennessee, received orders to send a regiment to occupy Athens to the north on the Tennessee and Alabama Railroad, and to take the rest of his brigade back to Huntsville. So on April 27, "Father" Stanley and the Eighteenth Ohio entered Athens, and the rest of the Eighth Brigade camped at Huntsville. On May 1 some mounted Confederates surprised and drove the Eighteenth Ohio out of Athens. Mitchel, riding up on a locomotive, met Stanley retreating and told him he would order up reenforcements. He ran back to the nearest telegraph station and ordered out Turchin with part of his brigade. He then returned to Huntsville. Turchin picked up Stanley and his men and hurried on to Athens. His troops cleared the Rebels out of the town on the morning of May 2 and then proceeded to do one of the most thorough jobs of pillaging that any town has had the misfortune to endure.[110]

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[109] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 656.

[110] Ibid., X, Pt. 1, 642, 876-77.

CHAPTER IV

THE SACK OF ATHENS

Military Conditions in Northern Alabama

Mitchel's campaign, which had begun with such hope and succeeded with such dash, began to deteriorate in the last days of April. True, the Bridgeport expedition had achieved notable strategic advantages, and there were a few more small triumphs to come. Nevertheless when Turchin withdrew from the south side of the Tennessee River, Federal power in Northern Alabama began to weaken.

From the beginning Mitchel had seen enormous strategic possibilities in his occupation of Northern Alabama: a drive against Corinth and the main link of Mobile and Chattanooga; an advance on Chattanooga and from there into East Tennessee--and the threat of this move worried the Confederate commander in East Tennessee, Major-General E. Kirby Smith, considerably--or North Georgia. Buell, while he was not violently opposed to the movement against Chattanooga at least, was inclined to see difficulties in it and did not in any case press Halleck for a quick execution of it. It was

his idea that the Federal armies should advance slowly securing everything behind them as they went, because it seemed to him that the occupation of the enemy's territory was just as important as beating his army in battle. This was also the view of the main obstacle to the kind of swift, aggressive action that Mitchel wanted, the Union Commander-in-Chief in the West, Major-General Henry Wajer Halleck.

Old Brains was commanding personally in the field after Shiloh, and he wasn't showing much ability. He was probably one of the best theoretically educated soldiers on the North American continent--hence the sobriquet, "Old Brains"--and he had proved himself an able administrator by straightening out the tangle Frémont had left behind him, but active direction of a large army was clearly beyond his capabilities. The near-disaster at Shiloh had scared him badly--Grant had not entrenched his army there, and the Confederates nearly drove it into the Tennessee as a result. So on the march to Corinth from Pittsburg Landing (which was on the Tennessee River a short distance from Shiloh church), despite the fact that he had Grant's, Pope's, and Buell's armies, together amounting to perhaps 120,000 men, and outnumbered Confederate Beauregard's force retreating before him by better than two to one, he moved cautiously, that is, slowly. He entrenched--every day he entrenched--and digging time reduced marching time, so that Halleck's army inched

its way toward Corinth glacially, carving up the countryside in its path.[111]

Halleck and Buell generally neglected Mitchel's operations. For one stretch of two weeks (late April and early May) Mitchel did not receive any communications from either of them. But Secretary of War Edmund M. Stanton and President Lincoln were extremely interested, and on April 21 Stanton ordered Mitchel to report his activities directly to the War Department. But Mitchel was still under the command of Buell and Halleck and he was getting little help from them. He didn't receive anything approaching the reenforcements he wanted to enable him to advance farther, and it wasn't until May 7 that he was given command of the area, and the troops therein, through which his communications ran from Nashville. Probably even this was achieved through pressure on Halleck from Washington. Mitchel complained repeatedly about the lack of support from Halleck, and there developed a rather depressing correspondence around the Huntsville-Washington-Pittsburg Landing triangle concerning Northern Alabama.[112]

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[111]Catton, p. 127; Horn, p. 148.

[112]This correspondence may be found in O. R., X, Pt. 2, 114-119, 124-26, 133-34, 155-56, 162-63, 166-67, 174-75, 178, 180-81, 195, 204, 212-13, 222, 262, 271, 275, 282, 290-95, 618-19, 624, 634.

What this all meant to Ormsby Mitchel was that he was not under any circumstances going to get the reenforcements he needed from Halleck and that the latter was not going to be in Corinth at any time soon. As a result he had to solve his problems mostly without outside help, and he had problems. His original objective had been the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, and holding on to it was the cause of them. He scattered portions of his command along it at important towns, bridges, and junctions, and he used it to supply them and move them around. In fact the safety of his force depended upon the continuous operation of the railroad. But this was no simple job. First, it took money, a great deal of it, to keep the trains moving, money which Mitchel did not have. But he had captured cotton, and he brought buyers for it down from the North. The money thus obtained was used to finance the operation of the railroad. It totaled about $18,000.[113]

More serious than the shortage of money, however, were the destructive activities of Rebel cavalry against the railroad. Darting here and there they at times nearly paralyzed

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[113] Ibid., 292-93. The eccentric colonel of the Twenty-First Ohio, Sill's Brigade, J. W. Norton, showed up in Cincinnati in July with voluminous charges against Mitchel for, among other things, corrupt dealings in the sale of cotton. Mitchel denied them, and Norton was eventually arrested when he went east, but Buell must have remembered this incident later.--Cincinnati Daily Commercial, July 15, 1862; Chicago Daily Tribune, July 15, 1862.

movement and generally made life miserable for Mitchel, Turchin, and every soldier in the Third Division. There were an incredible number of ways a railroad could be damaged, and the Rebels used all of them. They burned bridges, tore up tracks, derailed trains, cut telegraph wires, destroyed fuel and track ties. They attacked bridge guarding parties and larger detachments posted in towns, and they raided Mitchel's lines to the north. Sometimes unexpectedly a brilliant flash of heroism occurred in these incidents, like the defense of the railroad bridge at Paint Rock by two sergeants and twenty-two men of the Tenth Wisconsin, Sill's brigade, against two hundred and fifty enemy cavalry on April 28. But mostly there were infuriating minor disasters, as the time, May 1, when the pestiferous Morgan took two hundred and sixty prisoners at Pulaski, among them Captain F. A. Mitchel, Ormsby Mitchel's son and aid.[114]

Beside regular Confederate forces, Mitchel had to fight guerrillas and "bushwhackers," bandit-soldiers and shopkeepers with shotguns in their closets. In their mildest form they were spies and informers keeping the Rebel cavalry informed of Federal troop strengths and movements, telling them of opportunities when a small bridge guard could be snapped up. If they were more active, they flitted

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[114] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 653-55, 874-76; Mitchel, pp. 308, 324.

out of the night to kill, wound, burn, destroy, and then disappeared into the country they knew as the Federals did not.[115] Ordinary tactical moves and Buell's conciliatory policy brought little success against these people, so harsher measures were adopted. As John Beatty explained it:

> Here after every time the telegraph wire was cut we would burn a house; every time a train was fired upon we would hang a man; and we would continue to do this until every house was burned and every man hanged between Decatur and Bridgeport. . . . We proposed to hold the citizens responsible for these cowardly assaults.[116]

Beatty had seen eight of his men wounded in an ambush at the village of Paint Rock on that day, May 2, when he wrote this in his diary. He had backed his train up to Paint Rock after the ambush and set fire to the town, which action Mitchel approved when he heard of it. Ambush and retaliation soon became a general thing in Northern Alabama.[117]

When Rebel raiding reached its peak late in April, Mitchel had all he could to combat it. His division dangled

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[115] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 877.

[116] Beatty, p. 108.

[117] Ibid., pp. 108-109. Other bushwhacking incidents are recorded in Eighth Annual Reunion of the Tenth Wisconsin Infantry, Held at Waupun, Wis., September 2d and 3d, 1903 (n. d., n. p.), p. 32; Haynie, 177-78; Silas S. Canfield, History of the 21st Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion (Toledo, Ohio, 1893), pp. 45-47, 49; Fenton, "Anecdotes of Mrs. Turchin," Palmer Collection, Pt. J., pp. 2-5; "Partisan Warfare in Middle Tennessee and Northern Alabama," Pt. O, pp. 1-7.

down into Northern Alabama at the end of a tenuous line of communication and was strung out to protect the precious railroad. It was not nearly large enough a force to control the area which it was occupying. Cavalry especially was needed to scout the surrounding country and patrol the rail line. But Mitchel didn't get cavalry or much else, so he turned to expedients to partly make up this deficiency. He enrolled intelligent Negroes as scouts--bad medicine to Buell--and built a rickety little gunboat to operate on the Tennessee. And he was constantly in motion shuffling his forces around to keep his territory in hand, which it never quite was. He spent his spare moments yelling to Washington for reenforcements and wondering why Kirby Smith didn't come over and cut him off.[118]

The Sack of Athens

It was during those anxious, dangerous days of late April that Turchin sent the Eighteenth Ohio to Athens. Yet for a few days it seemed that Athens might be a little enclave of peace and good feeling, despite the turbulence around it. Athens was no jerkwater town. It was the admin-

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[118] O. R., X, Pt. 2, 124, 162; Mitchel, p. 321. At the same time Kirby Smith was wondering why Mitchel didn't come over and take Chattanooga. In April he had at various times only from three to six regiments in Chattanooga. For all of East Tennessee Smith had 16,000 men and twenty guns. --O. R., X, Pt. 1, 643; Pt. 2, 475-76.

istrative seat of Limestone County, and the 1860 census listed its population as 8,091 Negroes and 7,215 whites. Furthermore, Athens College, an institution of higher learning for young women was located there, adding a touch of enlightenment to the character of the town. There were a few people of Unionist sentiment there, too, and perhaps generally the citizens were more inclined to take a reasonable attitude toward the presence of Federal troops in their town. The men of the Eighteenth Ohio certainly met them halfway, for the deportment of the soldiers was exemplary, such as would have made even Buell proud.[119] One Athens citizen said that their conduct was "Unexceptionable! The Citizens were congratulating themselves upon having such an orderly set."[120]

But this good feeling vanished at the arrival of the Rebel cavalry. Colonel Stanley, on receiving word from Turchin that an enemy force was in the neighborhood of Brown's Ferry, sent a reconnaissance party there on April 30,

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[119]Willis Brewer, Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men, from 1540 to 1872 (Montgomery, Ala., 1872), p. 318; Richard W. Griffin, Athens Academy and College: An Experiment in Women's Education in Alabama, 1822-1873 (Alexander City, Ala.: Outlook Publishing Co., 1958), pp. 12-14; Unpublished Brief History of Athens Compiled by the Athens Chamber of Commerce.

[120]Testimony of W. P. Tanner, "Court-Martial Proceedings," p. 59.

but they came up empty.[121] Yet the very next morning, at about eight-thirty, Rebel Colonel J. S. Scott, First Louisiana Cavalry, came into town with one hundred and twelve of his men and two small cannon. Scott bumped into Stanley's pickets about a mile and a half southwest of town and drove them back through a wheat field on the McKinny farm. As his men reached McKinny's, Stanley came up to join them. They continued to fall back past the McKinny house, which was about a quarter-mile from the Courthouse Square, until they stopped and made a stand near the railroad station. Here another company coming from the Fairgrounds joined them, and together they reversed the flow, chasing the riders, some of them in gray and most in civilian clothes, out along the Florence road. Others of the Eighteenth joined in the chase, and the enemy galloped westward and out of sight. Panting from their run, the Ohio men then retraced their steps to the west side of the Courthouse Square where Stanley had the balance of the Eighteenth (excepting a few foraging details and a company guarding bridges) formed in line. It was about nine o'clock.[122]

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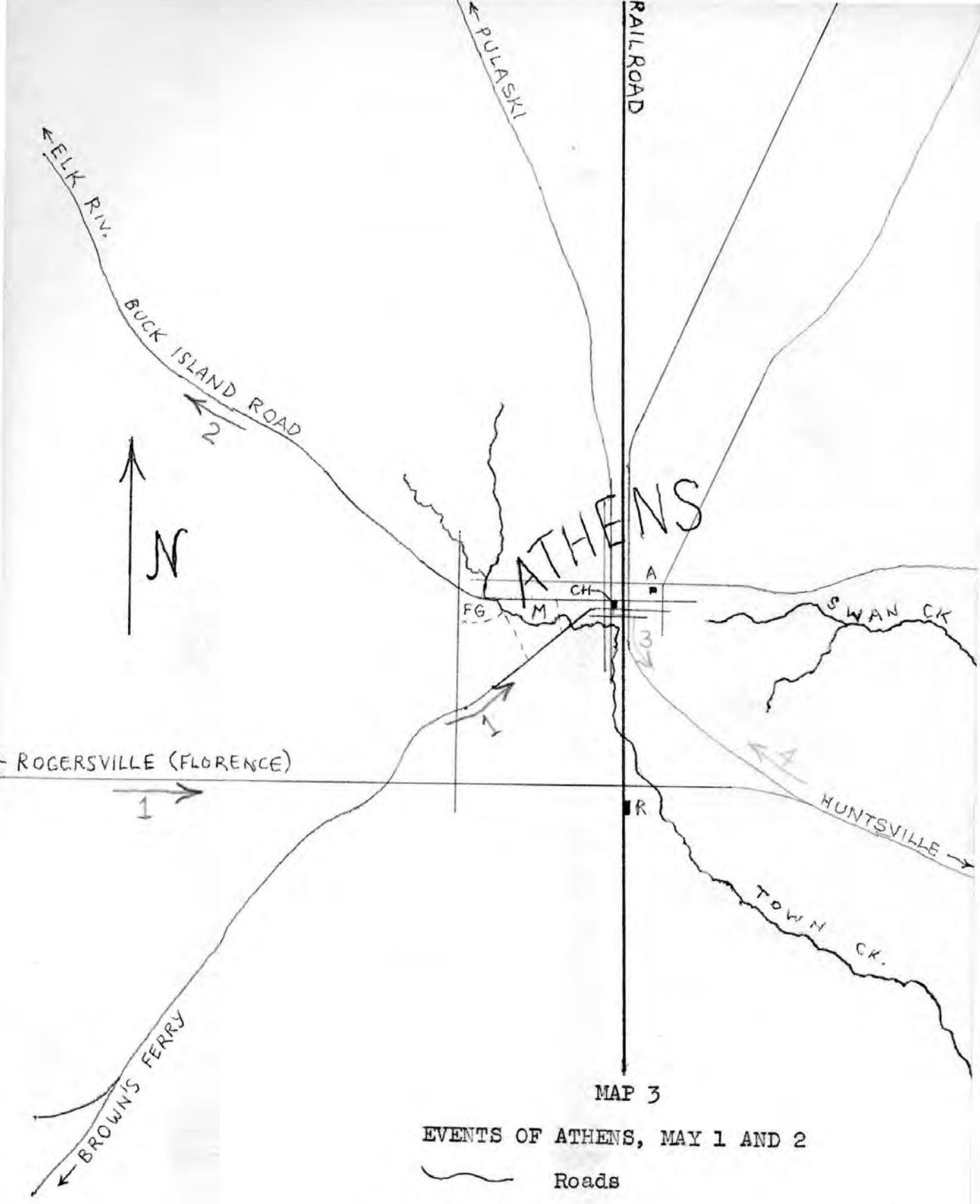
[121] This Brown's Ferry was in Northern Alabama and connected roads from Athens and Courtland. Another, more famous Brown's Ferry, in Tennessee, appears later in this narrative.

[122] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 878; "Court-Martial Proceedings," pp. 56-59, 139-40, 165-67, 182-83.



MAP 3

EVENTS OF ATHENS, MAY 1 AND 2

Roads

1 Scott, May 1
2 Scott, May 2
3 Stanley, May 1
4 Turchin, May 2
5 Kennett, May 2

Stanely now went out along the railroad south of Athens to look for the bridge-guarding force, which had not come in at the sound of the skirmish. In his absence Lieutenant-Colonel Given sent the regimental wagons southward toward the Huntsville road. At about ten o'clock two cannon reports from the west were heard, then a third much nearer, and without further waiting Given put the regiment in motion on the route of the wagons. The cannon noises apparently rattled him, for if the Eighteenth had made a fight of it right in town, it would have cleaned up Scott's force quite nicely. Stanley, coming back with his lost company, caught sight of his command as it was leaving town. Deciding that a defensive stand there in the open country was a bad risk, he kept the regiment moving toward Huntsville. There were two trains at the Athens depot with steam up, one of them containing 25,000 rations bound for Huntsville, and he ordered them to run southward. Just then Mitchel came up.[123]

Mitchel had left Huntsville on a locomotive, and he picked up the news of Stanley's encounter with the Rebel cavalry from a Negro at Mooresville. He sped on and ran near enough to Athens to see that the Eighteenth Ohio was leaving town in good order. He immediately sent off a note to Stanley telling him that he would be reenforced and to continue eastward. Then he backtracked to the nearest

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[123] Ibid., pp. 58-59, 92-94, 136-40.

telegraph sender to call out Turchin's brigade at Huntsville. The two trains from Athens caught up to him while he was telegraphing and the three of them continued southward. They were held up about an hour at Mooresville and then went on. The train guards were left at Mooresville to join the reenforcements at Athens. Mitchel's engine and the train behind him reached Huntsville in safety but the third one, the train with the rations, smashed up at the Limestone Creek bridge four miles east of Mooresville.[124]

It was Beaver Creek all over again. Earlier in the day fifty or sixty civilians had attacked the guard at the Limestone bridge killing two and wounding four and driving the rest away. They sawed the horizontal supports of the bridge (called "stringers") almost through and went out of sight to wait for a train to come along. Somehow the first two trains passed the bridge without trouble but when the heavy ration train came up, the bridge snapped, dropping it into Limestone Creek. Fortunately this time the train was not carrying carloads of soldiers, and of the train crew and the few soldiers on board, only three were killed. A brakeman died in the crash itself but two soldiers who were injured died horribly. The bushwhackers drove away the survivors and set the train on fire, saving only what they

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[124] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 876-77.

could carry away. The two injured men were trapped in a box-car as it began to burn and the Rebels wouldn't let them get out of it. So it became their coffin--they were burned to death. A few minutes later the train guards from Mooresville came up and put the enemy to flight. But the damage had been done.[125]

Meanwhile Rebel Colonel Scott and half of his force charged into Athens and took possession of it. They galloped in on the Florence road creating an incredible racket as they came and stopped briefly at the square to leave a small guard and get information from the crowd that had gathered there. Then they rushed off in pursuit of the Eighteenth Ohio. A few minutes later the rest of Scott's force rode in and followed them. Two citizens, J. B. Hollingsworth armed with a knife and George Mason with a shotgun, joined them. The hard-driving Rebel troopers missed Stanley's main force, but they did catch the twenty men who had been out foraging plus the four wagons they had with them. After looking around for other isolated detachments, Scott's men returned to Athens. A short time later Mason and Hollingsworth rode in with a prisoner, a wounded Union soldier, walking before them. They turned him over to Scott, who had a doctor take care of the man's wound, which was not serious, and then put him in the

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[125] Ibid., 877, "Court-Martial Proceedings," p. 115.

local jail. Scott then ordered the townsfolk to give his men dinner, which was done with much fraternizing between soldiers and civilians during the meal. After dinner a force went out to destroy Stanley's camp at the Fairgrounds. They burned everything but the knapsacks which they gave to the Negroes.[126]

While Athens was slipping out from under Federal control and disaster was striking at Limestone Creek, Turchin was preparing to march from Huntsville to pick up the pieces. Mitchel's order came over the wire at 1:30 P. M. telling him to take five hundred men over the railroad to Madison and thence to Athens by road. Turchin selected five companies, two hundred and fifty men each, from the Nineteenth Illinois and Thirty-Seventh Indiana. The commanders of these detachments were Lieutenant-Colonels Scott and William D. Ward. By the time Turchin had his men at the station Mitchel had returned. Mitchel told him that he was sending five or six companies of the Fourth Ohio under Colonel Kennett and a section of Loomis' battery along with him on the train, and that eight companies, five hundred men of the Twenty-Fourth Illinois, and Edgarton's guns were going to strike out on the road and meet his force near Athens.[127]

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[126] Ibid., pp. 58-59, 109, 141-46.

[127] Statement of Col. Turchin, Ibid., Appendix A, pp. 1-3.

Mitchel was boiling, and as Turchin was about to depart, "Old Stars" stepped out on the platform and delivered an angry harangue to the troops on their train. They were to "make all possible haste," he shouted, "to drive them to the river, to annihilate them."[128] Then turning to the men standing around him he said, "Go into them and don't leave a grease spot," and "don't leave a post standing."[129] Reflecting on these words later a captain of the Nineteenth Illinois said, "I suppose he intended we were to clean things out generally."[130] The soldiers at least got that message. Many of them thought that they would be ordered to burn Athens when they arrived there. Shortly after the troop train left, Mitchel had more to say. Hearing of the death of the two men in the Limestone wreck he said, "I will build a monument to these two men on the site of Athens. I have dealt gently long enough with these people. I will try another course now."[131]

Turchin disembarked his men at Madison and there they first learned of the tragedy at Limestone bridge plus incre-

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[128]Testimony of Captain Warren Edgarton, Battery E, First Ohio Artillery, "Court-Martial Proceedings," p. 148.

[129]Testimony of Sergeant Daniel Marcy, Nineteenth Illinois, Ibid., p. 163; also reported by Captain Knowlton Chandler, Nineteenth Illinois, Ibid., p. 155.

[130]Chandler, Ibid.

[131]Testimony of Second Lieutenant William B. Curtis, Nineteenth Illinois, Ibid., p. 116.

dible tales about the fate of the Eighteenth Ohio, at which everyone's temperature went higher. The men of the Nineteenth Illinois must have remembered that grim night at Beaver Creek and marked the parallel with the disaster at Limestone Creek. Doubtless they told their comrades about it. Thinking hard they marched toward Athens while Kennett took his cavalry on ahead to make contact with Stanley. Turchin and the main force soon met the Eighteenth and the cavalry and the Ohio boys told wild, exciting, untrue stories of their fight and retreat of the morning. Turchin ordered the Eighteenth to fall in behind his column and the seething soldiers marched on. All things considered, if they had reached Athens in that state of super fury that had built up in them, the town would have been reduced to toothpicks. But fortunately for all concerned darkness intervened, and Turchin closed down the march for the night at a point nine miles from Athens. Just before that Edgarton and Mihalotzy came up with their force.[132]

Shortly after sunrise next morning, May 2 (May 1 had indeed been a long and eventful day), D. H. Bingham, an Athens citizen and still an outspoken adherent to the old flag, was standing in front of his house talking with James Donnell, a citizen of opposite, that is Secessionist, senti-

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[132]"Court-Martial Proceedings," pp. 119, 148-49, 155, 185; Statement of Col. Turchin, Ibid., Appendix A, pp. 3-5.

ments. Union soldiers, Bingham predicted, "would be back here before 10 o'clock today, with reinforcements; and," he added ominously, "I should not be surprised if they destroyed our town." Never, replied Donnell. At that moment they saw a Blue horseman chase a Rebel rider westward past the house and through the town. "There they are now," exclaimed Bingham triumphantly.[133] At 3:00 A. M. Turchin had sent Kennett and his troopers to reconnoiter the town, and they found and chased five of Scott's pickets back through it. Scott with his main force at the Fairgrounds knew that there was a hard core of infantry behind this cavalry shell and immediately began to retreat northwestward toward the Elk River with Kennett in close pursuit. By the time Turchin got his infantry and guns up, Athens was clear of enemy troops and he marched in unopposed. Outside of town Turchin directed an aide, Second Lieutenant William B. Curtis, to halt the Twenty-Fourth and Thirty-Seventh companies and Edgarton's battery, while he personally led the Nineteenth Illinois detachment and Eighteenth Ohio and the guns from Loomis' battery into Athens. Then the fun began.[134]

Turchin rode in with his men and disposed them along

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[133]Testimony of Bingham, "Court-Martial Proceedings," pp. 171-72.

[134]"Court-Martial Proceedings," p. 116; Col. Turchin's Statement, "Court-Martial Proceedings," Appendix A, p. 5.

the south and west sides of the Courthouse Square to cover the Florence and Brown's Ferry roads. Then he had them stack arms and said, as reported by an Athens resident, that "he would shut his eyes for 2 hours and let them do as they pleased."[135] The men fanned out all over the square and through the town and shelled houses and stores like walnuts. The post office, a tailor shop, and all other stores on the square but three were ransacked, their contents stolen, torn, destroyed, or strewn on the floor or outside on the ground.[136] One citizen testified: "I saw soldiers going all over town, roaming without restraint, and nobody appeared to restrain them."[137] In the afternoon Turchin went out to the Fairgrounds and around town personally examined its defensive possibilities. He returned that night by which time Stanley, whom he had earlier appointed provost-marshal, had at least partly put the lid back on the town.[138] By that time, as Sergeant

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[135]Testimony of W. P. Tanner, Mayor of Athens, "Court-Martial Proceedings," p. 54. What Turchin exactly said on this occasion will never be known. Many and conflicting versions may be found in various sources. See Puntenny, pp. 23-24; Spillard F. Horrall, History of the Forty-Second Indiana Volunteer Infantry (Chicago, 1892), pp. 127-28; Canfield, p. 60; Joseph G. Vale, Minty and the Cavalry: A History of Cavalry Campaigns in the Western Armies (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1886), p. 28.

[136]"Court-Martial Proceedings," pp. 16-17, 37-42, 45-48, 50-55, 62-69, 76-77, 101-102, 107, 110.

[137]Testimony of Thomas J. Cox, Ibid., p. 40.

[138]"Court-Martial Proceedings," p. 116; Col. Turchin's Statement, Ibid., pp. 8-13.

Puntenny remembered it, "there was not much value to be seen in Athens. Not during all the remainder of the war was such wanton destruction of property seen by those men."[139] Coming from men who later laid a heavy hand on Georgia during Sherman's march this was quite an appraisal.

Kennett meanwhile had chased Scott's force to a slough near the Elk River and had tried to dislodge it from its position. He was unsuccessful. Turchin sent out Lieutenant-Colonel Given with reenforcements in wagons, but before they reached the place where the Fourth Ohio was fighting, the enemy escaped across the Elk. The Fourth Ohio lost four killed and eight wounded in this little engagement, twelve more names to be added to the Union loss for the day. But Athens was back in the grasp of the Federal forces.[140]

Until his baggage arrived on the sixth, Turchin quartered some of his troops in private residences; and in these the disorderly behavior of the troops continued. Part of the Twenty-Fourth Illinois was quartered at the home of John Haywood Jones, and he remonstrated with Colonel Mihalotzy at their conduct. Mihalotzy, in Jones' words, "cursed me and said I deserved it as I was nothing but a damned Secesh, and

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[139] Puntenny, p. 23.

[140] Ibid., pp. 117-120.

other similar words."[141] Soldiers also penetrated into the country sweeping up meat, grain, molasses, forage, horses, and other items. Some of this was taken out of military necessity and receipts were given in these cases. The rest went to satisfy in fuller measure the thirst for revenge that drove Turchin's soldiers. The most trivial aspect of their activities was the damage done in the fields: fences were torn down, fence rails burned, ripe grain in the fields smashed by horses' hooves. Limestone County, too, felt the heel of an angry conqueror.[142]

A natural result of the relaxation of discipline during this time was that the baser instincts of some of Turchin's men were allowed free play. On May 4 some soldiers attempted to rape a Negro servant girl of Mrs. Mildred Clayton. They were unsuccessful, but two soldiers of the Thirty-Seventh Indiana had better luck. The same day they walked out to the plantation of Mrs. Charlotte Hine, a widow who lived seven miles southwest of Athens. There they raped a teen-aged servant of Mrs. Hine. It was a particularly sickening outrage. The girl was only fourteen, but already a mother and was in fact sitting nursing her baby when the men came up. Her mother was sitting with her. The act was

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[141] Ibid., pp. 117-120.

[142] Ibid., pp. 21-26, 41-42, 128.

simple, brutal. The men made the girl put the baby down and raped her. Then they went away. With this act the Sack of Athens ended, more or less.[143]

Total property damage for the work done by Turchin's troops during their stay at Athens was reported by a committee of citizens to be $54,689.80.[144] Human damage was less apparent, more permanent. The people of Athens could scarcely be expected to take kindly to Yankees after their experience with Yankee soldiers. Thus the Sack of Athens left an imperceptible residue of hate.

The thoroughness of Turchin's men, and at the same time their discrimination, was remarkable. They managed to steal or break most of what they got their hands on, but one remarkable omission stands out--outside of fence rails, nothing was burned, not so much as an outhouse. The correspondent for the Chicago Times--a Democratic paper--with Mitchel's division wrote late in July: "I visited it [Athens] more than a month ago; I saw no signs of 'ruin,' dissolution, or decay."[145] It seemed that Turchin's men thought that the town would be burned. What matter than if they stole or wrecked property? It was all to go up in

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[143] Ibid., pp. 22, 34-35.

[144] O. R., X, Pt. 2, 212.

[145] Chicago Times, August 1, 1862.

flames anyway. Captain Edgarton remembered the march from Huntsville on the first of May and the mood of the men: "I believe it to be the general impression of the troops that the town of Athens was to be sacked and burned on our arrival. I will say in explanation," referring to Mitchel's inflammatory speech, "that I heard it remarked by soldiers that such proceedings had been ordered."[146] And Captain Chandler observed, "Some of our soldiers thought the town would certainly be burned."[147]

Athens clearly was the victim of an emotional condition of Turchin and his men, which was brought on by a chain of circumstances for which it was only partly responsible. The events which brought Turchin's soldiers to the doorsteps of Athens' stores with fire in their eyes were many, but there were two that were of primary importance: the Limestone wreck and the then current policy of retaliation for such an occurrence. Whether the people of Athens had shown themselves guilty or not of harboring or aiding bushwhackers was only a secondary consideration, a justification, after the fact and formed by reason, for an act committed in an atmosphere of excitement and intense feeling. The point was that in the soldiers' minds someone had to be made to suffer

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[146] "Court-Martial Proceedings," p. 149.

[147] Ibid., p. 156.

for the Limestone Creek affair and the people of Athens were unfortunate enough to have been both relatively handy and associated with it, if only accidentally.

Buell Gets Even

Northern Alabama cooled down somewhat after the first week of May, and Mitchel was again able to take the initiative after May 7 when Buell finally gave him command of his own communications. In the days that followed he sent an expedition to clear out Rogersville which was the base of Rebel raiders Scott, Morgan, and others, and to seize the crossings of the Tennessee west of Decatur. On May 15 he reported with satisfaction: "We have now possession of all the ferries below Decatur and the shoals [Muscle Shoals], and shall prevent hereafter the passage of any troops to the north side of the river."[148]

Halleck finally took Corinth on May 30, after Beauregard had evacuated it the day before. He now did what Mitchel had been begging that he do for a month and a half; he sent Buell and his army eastward toward Chattanooga. However, there was a catch in this. Buell wanted to move northward and advance via Nashville and McMinnville or Sparta, but Halleck made it an order that he advance along the Memphis and Charleston line and that he repair this as

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[148] O. R., X, Pt. 1, 892.

he went. The upshot of it was that Buell had to move slowly and did not reach Huntsville until the end of June. By this time the Confederates were about to take the initiative in the West and very soon Buell would have to hurry his whole army all the way back north to Kentucky, thus abandoning all the advantages that Mitchel and his men had labored to achieve in Northern Alabama.

Yet even as Buell was crawling eastward from Corinth, Mitchel was still thinking about further offensive moves. On June 6 he sent an expedition under genial, capable Brigadier-General James Negley, who commanded troops protecting his northern communications and including Turchin's brigade to confront Chattanooga. Negley moved by way of Bridgeport and Jasper, and then over a secret mountain path to the hills across the Tennessee from the city. He remained there for a day, his batteries exchanging fire with the Rebel guns on the opposite side, then withdrew. That was the closest Federal forces got to Chattanooga. It wasn't until fall of 1863 that it was in Union hands. By then Buell and Mitchel were gone, but Negley and Turchin were there.[149]

As Buell approached Huntsville, disturbing reports of

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[149]Horn, 151-52, 159; O. R., X, Pt. 1, 904, 919-20; James B. Fry, Operations of the Army Under Buell from June 10th to October 30, 1862 (Rev. ed.; New York, 1884), pp. 13-17.

some of Mitchel's activities began to reach his ears. He soon understood that Mitchel had junked his conservative, conciliatory policy, and this angered him considerably. He was a conservative militarily and politically, trying to win the war by orthodox procedure and with as little destruction of existing institutions, Southern and Northern, as possible. Mitchel on the other hand was freeing slaves--the "peculiar institution"--confiscating property (cotton, horses, etc.), and burning houses to stop the depredations of guerrillas and bushwhackers. Under insistent military necessity of occupying enemy territory with insufficient force, he was forced to depart from normal procedure, in effect to spread revolution. The Civil War was in fact a revolutionary war, and the armies were revolutionary instruments, destroying not only life and property, both perishable but never completely so, but institutions, which cannot be reestablished in exactly the same form. The successful generals were the ones who realized this state of affairs.[150]

Such facts, however, meant nothing to Buell who considered parts of the conduct of Mitchel and his troops a breach of his, Buell's, orders. His interest centered on the Athens affair, and he ordered Mitchel to make a thorough investigation of it and report his findings to army head-

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[150] O. R., XVI, Pt. 2, 90-91.

quarters. Mitchel complied with alacrity. He was by now disillusioned and worried. Buell had the bit in his teeth, and there was no telling where he would stop. Mitchel saw himself up before a court-martial; unhappy result after the happy, hopeful days of early April! He asked Stanton for a transfer to the Army of the Potomac. There was nothing left for him in Northern Alabama. He tried to stall Buell, telling him on June 30 that, while over $50,000 worth of damage had been done in Athens, a search of Turchin's men miraculously failed to turn up a single unauthorized item.[151] "Colonel Turchin," he continued, "has always declared that he did his utmost to prevent his troops from every irregularity. It is certain," he added gratuitously, "he has been unsuccessful."[152] Buell was unconvinced. He relieved Turchin of his brigade command July 2, and on the fifth he ordered Turchin tried by a court-martial.[153]

Turchin's trial began on July 5 and closed on July 30, 1862. Mihalotzy, Stanley, and Edgarton were to be tried after him for their participation in the Athens affair. The president of the court that was to try Turchin's and their cases was Brigadier-General James A. Garfield, the future

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[151] Ibid., X, Pt. 2, 222; XVI, Pt. 2, 71-72, 85-86.

[152] Ibid., 80.

[153] Ibid., 92, 99.

president of the United States, and the other members were colonels in the Army of the Ohio: Jacob Ammen, Twenty-Fourth Ohio, commanding a brigade in Nelson's division; Curran Pope, Fifteenth Kentucky; J. G. Jones, Forty-Second Indiana; Marc Mundy, Twenty-Third Kentucky; Thomas D. Sedgewick, Second Kentucky; and John Beatty, Third Ohio. The judge-advocate, who was to prosecute Turchin, was Captain Peter T. Swaine. It was Turchin's bad luck to have three Kentucky officers selected for his court, for many of the Kentucky officers, coming from a half-Southern state, shared Buell's belief that a conciliatory policy was the proper one for treating the Rebels. Mundy was especially notable in this respect. On the other hand, Beatty, Ammen, and Garfield represented the hard-war point of view, though at this stage none of them realized, as Turchin already had, just how rough hard war really was.[154]

Beatty, Garfield, and Ammen, along with Joseph Keifer, were close camp friends, though Beatty's comment that Garfield's handshake "suggested 'vote right, vote early,'" was not entirely affectionate.[155] Ammen was something of a character, though he was an eminently capable officer. He had been graduated from West Point and had taught there and

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[154] O. R., XVI, Pt. 1, 636; Pt. 2, 99.

[155] Beatty, p. 239.

at other colleges before the war. He and his brigade performed well under Bull Nelson at Shiloh. He was somewhat superstitious and liked to hear himself talk, though this latter characteristic was humorous rather than pompous.[156] Beatty said of him affectionately, "He is a strange combination of simplicity and wisdom, full of good stories, and tells those against himself with a great deal more pleasure than any others."[157] By contrast Colonel Jones received this judgment: "He cannot manage a regiment and not even his best friends have any confidence in his military capacity."[158] It was indeed a heterogeneous panel that faced Turchin.

It, in its multiple functions, was also a powerful body. It was the collective judge and ruled on points of law, and it was the jury which decided Turchin's guilt or innocence. In addition it had the duty to pass sentence on him when that action became necessary. Because a military court is so all-powerful, it is more liable to misuse its authority to the detriment of justice than a civil one. However, the nature of the charges against Turchin and of

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[156] Ibid., pp. 120-21; Reid, I, 901-902.

[157] Beatty, p. 122.

[158] Ibid., p. 142.

his defense virtually eliminated that possibility.[159] Except for one specification[160] of the third charge, the three charges against Turchin dealt with his part in the activities of his troops in and around Athens. The prosecution charged him with neglect of duty, conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and disobedience of orders for variously ordering, permitting, and not stopping some of these activities. He was also accused of failure to pay his board bill at Athens, but this was a comparatively minor matter. The central issue was simple and clear: how much was Turchin responsible for the Sack of Athens?[161]

The trial was a dreary affair and progressed with gloomy predictability. Many of the persons involved were sick at various times, including Turchin, Swain, Garfield, and a witness, First Lieutenant Robert Chandler of Loomis' Battery. At one point the robust Garfield became so ill with yellow jaundice that court had to be adjourned for the day, and for the next few days he presided at the trial while

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[159] U. S., Office of the Judge-Advocate General, A Manual for Court's-Martial, Courts of Inquiry and of Other Procedure under Military Law (Washington, 1917), pp. ix-xiv, 61.

[160] Specification four of charge three (disobedience to orders), the only specification to which Turchin pleaded guilty, stated that Turchin had his wife with him in the field in contravention of one of Buell's orders.--O. R., XVI, Pt. 2, 276.

[161] Ibid., 273-76.

lying on a cot.[162] Turchin turned Garfield's attitude toward him completely around during the course of the trial. On July 17 he wrote to a friend:

> From the accounts we had heard of him and his doings we had expected to meet as fierce and brutal a Muscovite as the dominions of the Czar could produce. . . . Though by a fiction of military law, the prosecution has been striving to fix upon him the robbery of citizens and rapes of female slaves, yet during all that time he has borne himself so much like a noble-souled man that he has quite won my heart.[163]

But once the trial began, everyone was irresistably mesmerized by the fatiguing ritual of legal procedure, and the capacity for independent thought seemed to disappear. Garfield, the president of the court, glumly told his friend that Turchin would "probably be dismissed from the army in a few days."[164]

The trial went as Garfield predicted. The prosecution called seventeen witnesses, most of them Athens citizens, each one with his own sorry little story of the events of the first week of May. They thoroughly detailed the outrages which occurred and made it plain that it was Turchin's troops who committed them. But, except in the matters of Turchin's

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[162]"Court-Martial Proceedings," pp. 13-15, 76-77, 84-85, 118; Smith, I, 229-30.

[163]Ibid., 228-29.

[164]Ibid., 229.

board bill and failure to issue vouchers for requisitioned horses, they gave no evidence of his direct participation in them. Turchin and his counsel, Colonel Gazlay of the Thirty-Seventh Indiana, made one attempt to wipe this testimony off the record. This was a statement submitted on July 10, while Turchin himself was still in bed sick. The statement was in the form of a motion and read thus:

> That each witness before being allowed to testify, be required to state under oath whether he or she is for the United States or Confederate States, and that each witness be required to take the oath of allegiance to the United States Government before he or she be allowed to testify.[165]

After deliberating the court ruled against this motion, but it nevertheless set the tone for Turchin's defense. This defense rested on two contentions: (1) that people making or supporting armed opposition to the government forfeited their rights under the Constitution; and (2) that the Sack of Athens was legitimate retaliation against acts of unlawful war committed on the persons of Federal troops in Northern Alabama. That Turchin and Gazlay presented evidence, various orders of Ormsby Mitchel, to shift the responsibility from Turchin is true enough, but no amount of directives from above could explain away the fact that Turchin was in Athens within eyesight and earshot of the Sack. The only answer was

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[165] "Court-Martial Proceedings," p. 15.

to show that the people of Athens deserved exactly what they got.[166]

Unfortunately the participation of the townsfolk was minimal as far as any evidence could indicate. Only Mason and Hollingsworth of the citizens took part in Scott's attack. The prosecution even got several soldiers of the Eighteenth Ohio to say definitely that the citizens did not molest them in any way when they left town on the first of May. However there was one fact that was open to several interpretations. Most of the men who rode with Scott were attired in civilian clothing, not military uniform. They thus could have been civilians operating irregularly as guerrillas, as Turchin and his men thought, or they could simply have been regular soldiers whom a strapped Southern government could not clothe in a standard uniform. But other than this and the actions of Mason and Hollingsworth there was nothing to show that Athens merited the Sack.[167]

The court had no choice but to find Turchin guilty. It had heard testimony substantiating several of the charges against Turchin and this was enough. Consequently Turchin was found guilty of neglect of duty and disobedience to

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[166]The prosecution testimony is to be found in Ibid., pp. 16-115, and the defense testimony on pp. 115-156. Defense arguments are in Appendixes A and B.

[167]Ibid., pp. 98, 140.

orders for permitting and not restraining the unlawful actions of his troops at Athens.[168] Concerning the second charge the court gave the following opinion:

> The court being of the opinion that the defendant is guilty of conduct unbecoming "an officer," but being unprepared to say that his conduct is unbecoming "a gentleman," find him guilty of conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline.[169]

The law allowed the court considerable latitude in the matter of the sentence and here it is surprising that Turchin did not get a better break. He was sentenced to be dismissed from the service, a singularly extreme punishment. It seemed as if the members of the court were cowed by the threat of Buell's disapproval or had had their sensitivity dulled by the stuffy heat of the courtroom or by the relentless monotony of the judicial process. But perhaps in a fit of remorse, or thinking to placate Turchin after satisfying Buell, all but Colonel Pope signed a recommendation for leniency which read:

> The Undersigned Members of General Court Martial before which was tried Col. J. B. Turchin, 19th Regiment, Ill's. Vol's, respectfully submit that in view of the fact that the finding of the Court acquits Col. Turchin of any personal dishonor; and believing that his offense was committed under exciting circumstances and was one rather of omission rather than of commission would respectfully recommend him

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[168] O. R., XVI, Pt. 2, 277.

[169] Ibid.

> to the favorable consideration of the reviewing officer.[170]

The only trouble was that Buell was the reviewing officer and he was not about to intervene on Turchin's behalf. In his statement of review Buell took note of the recommendation for leniency but continued:

> The general commanding has felt constrained nevertheless to carry the sentence into effect.
>
> Colonel Turchin was tried for disorderly conduct of his command at and in the vicinity of Athens, and the sentence of the court rests on that matter alone, but on the question of clemency, it is proper to look beyond the record of the court.[171]

Then, after scoring Turchin for not maintaining discipline and preventing the outrages at Athens, Buell made his best point, to which Turchin had no answer:

> The command was supposed to be in the presence of an enemy that might take advantage of any confusion in its ranks. Every man should have been at his post instead of roaming over the town and country to load himself with useless plunder. In point of fact the criminality is not so much that good order was violated on the particular occasion as that by the habitual neglect of discipline the orders of the commander were unavailing at a time when the observance of it might be of vital importance.[172]

Thus Thurchin was out of the army.

Or so it seemed. But citizens and newspapers in

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[170] Dated Huntsville, July 30, 1862, "Court-Martial Proceedings," Appendix A.

[171] O. R., XVI, Pt. 2, 277.

[172] Ibid., 277-78.

the North were writing letters and editorials on Turchin's behalf, and soon after the trial began Nadine left Northern Alabama, went to Chicago and enlisted a group of citizens in her husband's cause and advanced on Washington with them to demand his reinstatement of Stanton and Lincoln. Amazingly Lincoln not only granted this request, setting aside the sentence of the court-martial, but, acting on Ormsby Mitchel's earlier recommendation, promoted Turchin to the rank of Brigadier-General before the trial was even over. As a soldier-correspondent in Buell's army expressed it, "truly in the lottery matrimonial Col. Turchin had the good fortune to draw an invaluable price."[173] The commission was issued on July 19 and was dated July 17. It was sent to Chicago where Turchin accepted it on September 1.[174]

Mitchel and Turchin were guilty of letting discipline

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[173] Chicago Times, August 8, 1862; Quincy, Illinois, Daily Whig and Republican, August 12, 1862.

[174] Veterans Administration, "Turchin's Military History," pp. 2-3. Buell's luck had turned sour this summer of 1862. In the Turchin case Lincoln had overruled a verdict which he, Buell, had approved and carried out. This was outright interference with his command. Even worse, about this same time one of his trusted subordinates, Bull Nelson, was murdered before several witnesses by another Federal general named, of all names, Jefferson Davis. And to Buell's horror, because of the way the prevailing political winds blew, Davis, after spending a few weeks in jail, returned to the army and eventually rose to a corps command in the Army of the Tennessee. He was never prosecuted.--Fry, Military Miscellanies (New York, 1889), pp. 487-89, 495-96.

sag a bit in their commands, but they can be excused by the difficult situation they were in. It is harder to excuse Buell and Halleck for failing to send an adequate occupation force to Northern Alabama. They were apparently indifferent to Mitchel's needs; and the Athens events occurred right in the middle of the two-week period of silence from army headquarters. Actually from the time he left Murfreesboro until the time Buell arrived in Huntsville, Mitchel's was an independent command, expected to exist on its own resources; and for Buell to come in and court-martial one of Mitchel's officers was gauche to say the least. The responsibility for the Sack of Athens can be evenly distributed among four persons: Turchin, Mitchel, Buell, and Halleck.

Buell's conciliatory policy suffered its first clear-cut defeat in Northern Alabama. In the beginning Mitchel had tried, with the encouragement of a leading Huntsville Unionist, Judge G. W. Lane, to conciliate the hostile population of Northern Alabama. But Judge Lane, testifying before the court investigating Buell's command in the fall of 1862 said,

> No good came from the conciliatory policy; no good has since resulted from it, and I have seen fit to change my views on that subject.
>
> THE PRESIDENT [of the Court]. No good?
>
> No good, sir. . . . I think now that if the Union men knew that they were to be protected, while the burdens should fall alone upon the secessionists, it

> could have made the Union men more decided. Sharing the burdens with the secessionists I think had an unfavorable effect.[175]

The final, crushing blow to the "safe" policy of Buell was delivered by Braxton Bragg, who had taken over command of the Confederate army below Corinth. Bragg collected his forces, slipped eastward to Chattanooga, and then raced northward into Kentucky, uprooting the system of occupation which Buell had methodically established. And part of the subsistence for Bragg's army came from the supplies which Buell had been very careful not to confiscate or destroy.

As reports of the court-martial began to reach the North, a storm of criticism fell upon Buell. Soldiers wrote to the folks at home and newspaper correspondents sent articles to their papers, most of them denouncing Buell and his "soft" policy. Mitchel and Turchin came in for a great deal of applause in some of these pieces. The Chicago Daily Tribune said: "Col. Turchin has had, from the beginning, the wisest and clearest ideas of any man in the field about the way in which the war should be conducted." Turchin, it concluded, "believes in the war. That, Don Carlos don't."[176] While the trial was in progress the Missouri Democrat (which was Republican in politics) of St. Louis editorialized: "We are not disposed to prejudge the case, but would suggest that

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[175] O. R., XVI, Pt. 1, 479.

[176] July 15, 1862.

the 'head and front' of Mitchell's [sic] offending is, that he has not been sufficiently mindful of the tender 'sensibilities' of the inhabitants of Secessia and has actually treated some of them as traitors deserve to be treated."[177] There was an editorial in the Cincinnati Daily Commercial, entitled "A Model Brigadier General," which sounded like it was written by Turchin's mother.[178] There were also letters to important people in the government. Stanton received a particularly bitter one which denounced using "traitors" as witnesses at the trial and called Lincoln a "vascillating, no policy president, whose weakness had cursed our people."[179] Another citizen wrote to the assistant secretary of war, "I wish as far as you can you will see justice done Turchin, for Ills. [Illinois] will sustain him for the acts for which he has been condemned."[180]

If the militarily unsophisticated Northern public was demanding a harder prosecution of the war, there were more generals who came to see that Turchin was right when he said,

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[177]July 16, 1862. [178]July 28, 1862.

[179]Dwight L. Cutler to Stanton, Chicago, August 11, 1862, Records Relating to John B. Turchin, Record Group No. 94, National Archives.

[180]Grant Goodrich to Peter Watson, August 8, 1862, Ibid.

> The more lenient we are to secessionists the bolder they become and if we do not change our policy and prosecute this war with vigor, using all means that we possess against the enemy including the emancipation of slaves the ruin of this country is inevitable.[181]

That summer Sherman was telling a group of citizens of Memphis that he considered their town a conquered Rebel stronghold. A Cincinnati reporter paraphrased his next remark: "The people of the city were prisoners of war. They may be Union and they may not. One thing was certain: they had not fought for the Union, so far as he had heard."[182] And George Thomas, a quiet, reserved, modest man and a regular army officer for all of his adult life, was of the same mind as the civilians in this matter. His statement, coming as it does from one who could be called a moderate, summarizes the swell of hard feeling that was sweeping over the North in summer of 1862. He said:

> The late civil war was a rebellion and history will so record it. Those engaged in it are and will be pronounced rebels; rebellion implies treason; and treason is a crime, and a heinous one too, and deserving punishment; and that traitors have not been punished is owing to the magnaminity of the conqueror.[183]

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[181] Statement of Col. Turchin, "Court-Martial Proceedings," Appendix A, pp. 32-33.

[182] Cincinnati Daily Commercial, July 28, 1862.

[183] Freeman Cleaves, Rock of Chickamauga: The Life of General George H. Thomas (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1948), p. 293.

Late in the war, hearing that a Rebel general was contemplating a guerrilla raid into East Tennessee, Thomas directed one of his subordinates, "Tell him we are prepared, and if he makes the attempt, I will so despoil Georgia that it will be a wilderness 50 years hence."[184]

Turchin thus received public and official vindication and had the satisfaction of seeing his policy become general in the Union armies. But to him the problem went deeper than the reputation of any one individual. As he told his judges:

> The problem before us is grand. Universal Freedom is at stake; and I feel humiliated when I think that perhaps this people until now considered a great and generous people will show to the world their incapacity to master the present difficulties and to enjoy freedom and self-government.[185]

It was vitally important to him that the war be put on a proper footing, and the public storm that had arisen pleased him only because it meant his way of operating would be taken up by other Federal generals. To him it was an indication of progress.

Yet there was one honor that moved Turchin deeply. He left Huntsville for Chicago on the fifteenth of August, taking the train westward to the Tennessee and thence northward through Athens. Private Johnston of the Nineteenth

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[184] Ibid., p. 283.

[185] Statement of Col. Turchin, "Court-Martial Proceedings," Appendix A, p. 33.

Illinois described Turchin's departure:

> From Company A 7 1/2 miles from Huntsville to here [First Bridge South of Reynolds Station] the boys rushed at the sight of him & cheered him out of sight. Where the train stopped long enough he shook hands with all the boys. He often had difficulty to keep back the tears at this demonstration of an affection undiminished, yea increased by misfortune.[186]

Johnston then went on to reflect on the remarkable relationship that existed between Turchin and his soldiers: "Surely it must be a real love of his, thus to gain & keep the affection of all his command."[187]

This was the touching end to Turchin's service in Northern Alabama.

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[186] Johnston to his mother, August 16, 1862, Turchin Collection.

[187] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CHICKAMAUGA

The Tullahoma Trail

As a brigadier-general Turchin had to wait more than half a year before returning to active duty in a post commensurate with his rank. Had he still been a colonel, nothing would have been easier than to take command of one of the new regiments that were periodically entering the service. Perhaps one reason why Lincoln promoted him was to keep him out of the army for a while until Buell's hash was settled one way or another. At any rate, on March 3, 1863, Turchin was ordered back to duty and on the seventeenth of April he was placed in command of the Second Brigade, Second Division, Fourteen Corps, Army of the Cumberland.[188]

The Army of the Ohio was by now the Army of the Cumberland. Buell had been removed after misfortune and bad policy had made his continuance impossible. Ormsby Mitchel was dead, a victim of fever on the Carolina coast. The commander of the Army of the Cumberland was Major-General

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[188] O. R., XXIII, Pt. 2, 183, 246.

William Starke Rosecrans, impetuous, excitable "Old Rosey," a first-rate strategist and a good soldier generally. Rosecrans had organized the army as follows: Fourteenth Corps, Thomas, variously known as "Pap" and "Old Slow Trot;" Twentieth Corps, Major-General A. M. McCook, who by general agreement had no business commanding an army corps; Twenty-First Corps, Major-General Thomas Crittenden, whose brother, George, was a Confederate general and whose father, John, had been a U. S. Senator from Kentucky; Reserve Corps, Major-General Gordon Granger; and Cavalry Corps, Major-General David S. Stanley.

Turchin commanded the Second Brigade for only sixteen days; then on May 3 he was transferred to command the First Division of the Cavalry Corps. The cavalry was the weakest arm in the Union armies as there was a shortage of trained cavalry officers. This is probably why Turchin, on the basis of his Russian service in the horse artillery, was moved to a cavalry command. It is also probable that he would have preferred to remain with the infantry. At the same time he was pleased with the advancement from brigade to division command. It put him nearer a major-general's commission and closer to the operations of the army as a whole, for though Rosecrans was as self-confident as anybody, he liked to have the opinions of his top commanders on important strategic questions.

Just such a case came up on June 8 when Rosecrans sent a confidential circular to his corps and division commanders asking in substance the following questions: (1) had the enemy been sufficiently weakened by detaching forces to other areas to give a good prospect for the Army of the Cumberland to beat him in a big battle; (2) would an advance of the Army of the Cumberland now prevent the enemy before it from sending reenforcements to the army fighting Grant around Vicksburg; and (3) is an immediate advance of the army advisable?[189] At this time the Army of the Cumberland was concentrated around Murfreesboro. Braxton Bragg's opposing Confederate army, officially styled the Army of Tennessee, (the Confederates named their armies after states or geographical areas; the Federals named theirs after rivers), was in strong defensive positions on rugged country. His two large infantry corps under Hardee and ex-Episcopal bishop of Mississippi, Lieutenant-General Leonidas Polk, were entrenched around Shelbyville and Manchester; and his cavalry extended the line to Columbia and McMinnville on either side. His supply base was at Tullahoma farther to the South.

The consensus shown by the answers to these questions was a negative to all three of them, though there was scattered dissent on some points. The only general recommending

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[189] Ibid., 394-95.

with minimal reservations an immediate advance was Garfield, now a major-general and Rosecrans' chief-of-staff, but he had not properly been asked for an opinion.[190] In his reply Turchin expressed general agreement with the majority, but he also drew on his broad military background to highlight several features of Rosecrans' strategic problem. His answer was dated midnight of the day the circular was received, hinting that he had been turning the question over in his mind for some time. Turchin thought that Bragg had detached some forces, but not enough to weaken himself seriously: "I think he has enough of troops to show us some fight in the gaps of the [Cumberland] mountains, being ready to fall back toward the Tennessee River any time we seriously attack him."[191] His next words were a warning which, had he heeded it, would have saved Rosecrans from the near-disaster which overtook him in September. Turchin pointed out that Bragg's

> . . . line of defense is not in Middle Tennessee, but behind the Tennessee River.
>
> We may reasonably expect to gain some advantages by moving south; but suppose the enemy falls back and we are on the Tennessee River, what then? Our communications will be long and exposed; our left flank will be uncovered. . . . Moving south, we must have a strong column to move to East Tennessee, to drive the enemy out and occupy it.[192]

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[190] Ibid., 395-97, 402-15, 417-18.

[191] Ibid., 396

[192] Ibid.

about East Tennessee were unhappily prophetic.

The situation changed to such a marked degree toward the end of June that Rosecrans decided on a move forward. Up in Kentucky the expedition into East Tennessee was being prepared and Rosecrans' left flank would probably be protected. Unfortunately the command of it was given to bumbling Major-General Ambrose Burnside. Meanwhile, in Mississippi Grant had a lock on Vicksburg: its fall was only a matter of weeks. Thus the right flank was also secure. Rosecrans had 50,017 men--40,146 infantry, 6,806 cavalry, and 3,065 artillery--to Bragg's 46,665--30,449 infantry, 13,962 cavalry, and 2,254 artillery. This was no great superiority for an offensive move but Old Rosey had made up his mind. Orders for an advance went out on June 23.[194]

It would not go straight in against the Confederate fortifications; neither would it strike along the rood roads and open country west of the Murfreesboro-Shelbyville rail line, for Bragg was watching this area closely. Rosecrans planned to feint at Shelbyville and slide his main force around Bragg's right flank in hopes of getting it on the

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[194]William Lamers, Edge of Glory: A Biography of General William S. Rosecrans, U.S.A. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1961), pp. 273-75.

railroad just below Tullahoma. Then Bragg, with his right turned and his supply line and route of retreat cut, would have to back out of his works and fight on open ground or retreat by a more dangerous route. The success of the movement depended upon the ability of the feint to keep Hardee stationary at Wartrace while the main force moved around toward Manchester. On the twenty-third Granger with his small corps started westward, while Stanley took three brigades of cavalry (leaving Turchin with one brigade) and moved against Eagleville. Stanley bivouacked in front of Shelbyville and lighted large campfires throughout the country behind him. Between them, Granger, Stanley, and the campfires, fooled Hardee and Polk, who remained at Wartrace and Shelbyville.[195]

After his right force had moved, Rosecrans sent the corps of Thomas and McCook to occupy Manchester and sent Crittenden's corps, with Turchin and his one cavalry brigade in front, on the far left through the rough country of the Barrens to menace Bragg's communications. It looked simple. But east and southeast of Murfreesboro the terrain was mountainous, the roads--the only possible way of moving the army--poor. On top of that it rained bullfrogs for seventeen straight days making movement excruciatingly difficult.

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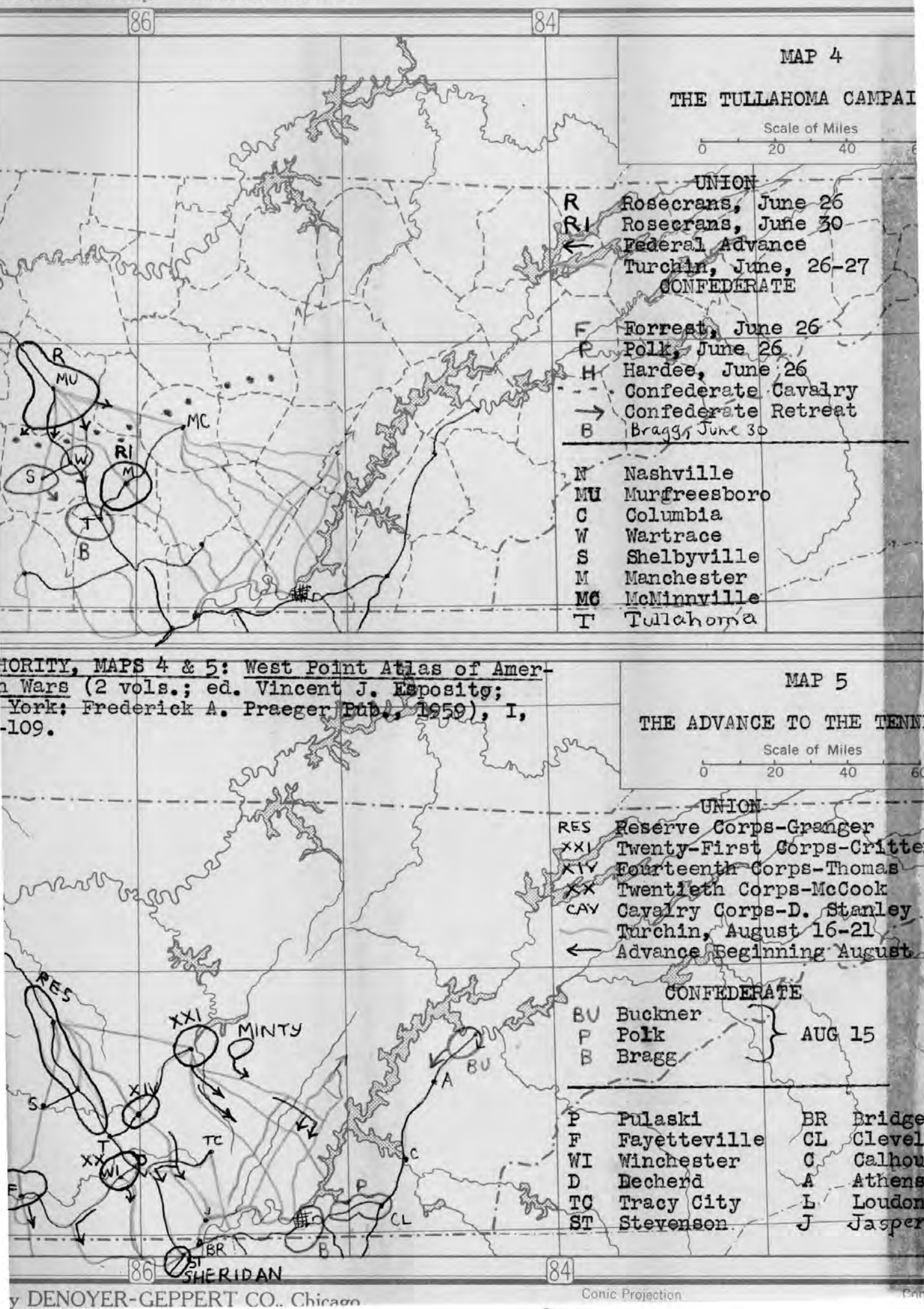
[195] Ibid., pp. 277-78.



HORITY, MAPS 4 & 5: West Point Atlas of Amer-
n Wars (2 vols.; ed. Vincent J. Esposito;
York: Frederick A. Praeger Pub., 1959), I,
-109.

Thomas and McCook did not have excessive trouble and reached Manchester in good time. But Crittenden and Turchin had all sorts of problems. The rains turned the roads to a bottomless jelly in which horses, mules, guns, and wagons floundered and sometimes disappeared. Thomas and McCook had reached Manchester on the twenty-sixth, but Turchin's advance elements didn't make contact with them until the twenty-seventh. It wasn't until a few days later that all of Crittenden's corps came up.[196]

With Stanley and Granger pressing him on the left, and Thomas, McCook, and Crittenden at Manchester, Bragg knew that his position was untenable; and he hastily pulled his army back to Tullahoma. Meanwhile a Federal brigade of mounted infantry armed with seven-shot repeating rifles under the command of Colonel John Wilder dashed behind the Southern army and destroyed the railroad and its station at Decherd, south of Tullahoma. Rosecrans was on the Confederate flanks; and with the railroad broken behind him, Bragg had finally to evacuate Tullahoma, too. His army left on July 1, not stopping until it got south of the Tennessee River. Rosecrans did not pursue him south of the river. The Army of the Cumberland lost five hundred and seventy men

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[196] Ibid., pp. 278-79; O. R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 552-53; LII, Pt. 1, 370, 374.

in its advance, but it took over sixteen hundred prisoners, including fifty-nine officers. For Turchin and most of the army the trail to Tullahoma had been a wet, rocky one, but they had a remarkable victory to show for their damp efforts.[197]

The Road to Chickamauga

On July 28, a few weeks after the close of the Tullahoma campaign, Turchin was transferred out of the cavalry to the infantry. He was in fact demoted. From the command of a division of cavalry he moved down to the Third Brigade, Fourth Division, Fourteenth Corps. This brigade had been commanded by Brigadier-General George Crook, later famous as an Indian fighter, who succeeded Turchin as commander of the cavalry division. David Stanley was not satisfied with Turchin's performance as a cavalry leader and asked for his removal. A member of Turchin's division explained what bothered Stanley about Turchin's methods:

> His failure as commander of cavalry was due, more than anything else, to the fact that he marched with too long a tail, his staff, orderlies and escort numbering nearly four hundred men; and as he always wanted to be personally at the front, just behind the advance guard, his infernal tail stood in the way of the fighting material of his division, so that . . . he invariably lost the fruits of any rapid movement in the advance.[198]

This writer also observed that Turchin "was physically out

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[197]Lamers, pp. 284-91 [198]Vale, p. 196.

of place on horseback, the circumference of his body being equal to his height,"[199] which suggests that Turchin had taken on a little weight during his lay-off in Chicago. Turchin was relieved and Stanley's chief-of-staff wrote happily, insensitively, "Turchin was relieved this morning. Good!"[200]

Turchin was unquestionably hurt by his transfer. John Beatty, who saw him on the way to his new command wrote, "he appeared to be considerably cast down in spirit."[201] But now at least he was back with the infantry, which arm he liked best. And he was in an excellent army corps. Pap Thomas commanded the Fourteenth and he was one of the great soldiers of the war. He was a Virginian, but like David Farragut, had chosen to stick by the old flag when the Civil War came. From that time his two sisters refused to acknowledge his kinship. He was massive, majestic, reserved, unostentatious to a fault, and the sparsest of talkers. Old Pap, it was said, "usually reflects twice before he speaks once."[202] But withal he was not slow or ponderous, for under-

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[199] Ibid.

[200] O. R., XXIII, Pt. 2, 568.

[201] p. 226.

[202] Glenn Tucker, Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1961), p. 322.

neath his placid, rather drab exterior was a first-rate, agile mind.[203]

Thomas had been a leading figure in the Armies of the Ohio and Cumberland almost from the beginning of the war and had commanded the Fourteenth Corps since its creation shortly before the battle of Stone's River. He got the best from his men and they always recognized his ability. Gradually they came to appreciate his innate warmth and kindheartedness, too, and gave him the affectionate nickname of "Pap." By the time Turchin joined it, the Fourteenth Corps was a superb fighting instrument; and a man who fought with it had a high standard to maintain. Thomas' division commanders in August, 1863, were seasoned soldiers all: First Division, Brigadier-General Absolom Baird; Second Division, Major-General James Negley; Third Division, Brigadier-General John M. Brannan; and Fourth Division, Major-General Joseph J. Reynolds.

Reynolds was an Indiana man. He had been graduated from West Point tenth in the class of 1843, in which Grant also graduated. He was and remained a close friend of Grant. After a few years of garrison duty in the east he returned to the Point to teach engineering and from 1857 to the outbreak of the war he taught at Washington University in St.

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[203]The two best biographies of Thomas are those by McKinney and Cleaves already cited. There is an excellent short sketch of him in Tucker, pp. 321-28.

Louis. Wishing to lead troops from his native state in the war he returned to Indiana where he was placed in command of the Tenth Indiana. After serving in West Virginia with McClellan and Rosecrans he reported to the Army of the Cumberland prior to Stone's River. He possessed all of the solid capabilities of a well-trained officer.[204]

The boys of the Eleventh Ohio, one of Turchin's new regiments, liked to tell a story that reveals much about Reynolds and Turchin and their different attitudes toward the war. One evening on the march south to the Tennessee Turchin halted his brigade near a sweet potato patch, which the men of the Eleventh immediately assaulted. As the regimental historian remembered it, "General Reynolds . . . saw the foragers from his tent, and immediately mounted his horse, rode down to General Turchin's quarters and reprimanded him rather severely for not placing a guard around the premises."[205] Turchin replied that he had forgotten about it but would get a guard out at once and went after the provost guard. Then telling the guard to follow him (on foot) he rode down to the yam field and the following dialog took place:

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[204]George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of Officers and Cadets of the U. S. Military Academy (8 vols.; Boston, 1891), II, 161; Tucker, pp. 161-62.

[205]Horton, p. 263.

"What you doing dare, boys?"

"Getting sweet potatoes, General."

"You besser get out of dare--de guards are coming. Besser you go around dat way, or de guards will catch you!"[206] And Turchin gestured in a direction opposite from whence the provost guard was marching. Those yams disappeared for all time and Turchin's relations with Reynolds were never the same.

Turchin's brigade was composed of four Ohio regiments--the Eleventh, commanded by Colonel Philander P. Lane; the Thirty-Sixth, under Colonel William G. Jones; the Eighty-Ninth, Colonel Caleb H. Carlton; and the Ninety-Second, Colonel Benjamin D. Fearing--and the Eighteenth Kentucky, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Hubbard K. Milward. In addition, Second Lieutenant William Chess's Twenty-First Battery, Indiana Light Artillery was attached to the brigade. The Ohio regiments had formed a brigade which Crook had led in West Virginia and which was part of Burnside's corps of the Army of the Potomac at South Mountain and Antietam, the bloodiest single day of the war. They had joined the Army of the Cumberland during the first months of 1863.[207] The Army of the Potomac was more of a spit-and-polish outfit

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[206] Ibid., p. 264.

[207] Reid, II, 83-86, 232-35, 494, 512-13.

than either of its two western counterparts. Consequently the discipline of these Ohio troops was quite high and Turchin had no problem with them. On the other hand, the Eighteenth Kentucky had had bad luck. It had spent all of its service in Kentucky and Tennessee and on August 30, 1862, it had fought in the battle of Richmond, Kentucky, where Nelson with a scratch force of raw regiments had been routed. Here the Eighteenth lost fifty-two killed and one hundred and fifteen wounded, and most of the rest of its complement was captured. Later most of the captured were paroled and returned to duty, the regiment joining Crook's brigade. The Eighteenth was looking for something better than it had seen before.[208]

Turchin provoked the same warm reaction from his new command which he had received from his previous ones (even his cavalry men had liked him personally.) The scribe of the Eleventh Ohio described the impression that the new commander made:

> We found the General to be an accomplished officer, a gentleman of fine social qualities, and on duty strict enough for all practical purposes.

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[208] Thomas Speed, R. M. Kelly, and Alfred Pirtle, The Union Regiments of Kentucky (Louisville, 1897), p. 464; U. S., Adjutant-General's Department, Official Army Register of the United States Army for the Years 1861, '62, '63, '64, '65 (8 vols.; Washington, 1865), VI, 1270; McKinney, p. 148.

. . . . . .

> . . . The general always regarded the comfort and welfare of his men in preference to that of the rebel inhabitants of the country where he happened to be.[209]

Evidently the Turchin of 1863 had changed very little from the Turchin of the year before.

He took command of the Third Brigade at Big Springs two miles from Decherd on August 1, in time to lead it on the march across the Tennessee River into Northern Georgia and Alabama. Rosecrans, after resting and refitting his exhausted army and trying to get more horses from the War Department, was now going to move southward again. His plan was to flank Bragg out of Chattanooga as he had flanked him out of Tullahoma. But this time he would feint at Bragg's right, above Chattanooga and at the city itself and put his flanking force across the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama to move on Bragg's communications south of Chattanooga. Crittenden would make the feint on the left, while Thomas would move directly toward Chattanooga and McCook worked his way around to the west. The key to the success of the movement was to get Thomas and McCook across the Tennessee quickly, so that Bragg could not shift forces to dispute the crossing.[210]

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[209]Horton, pp. 262, 264.

[210]Reid, II, 85; Lamers, pp. 301-302.

Rosey's marching orders went out on August 15 and the next morning the army began to move. Crittenden crossed the Cumberland Mountains at Pikesville and marched southwestward. Robert Minty's cavalry brigade covered his left flank. McCook had earlier sent one division, Phil Sheridan's, to repair the railroads leading into and out of Stevenson, and now he moved his other two divisions, under Richard W. Johnson and Jef. C. Davis, along the route of Turchin and Ormsby Mitchel from Fayetteville to the Memphis and Charleston and thence eastward along the line toward Stevenson. He had his corps at and around Stevenson by August 20. David Stanley with the bulk of the cavalry was out farther westward protecting the right flank of the army. Thomas reached the Tennessee one day earlier than McCook, sending his divisions by three routes: Negley *via* the railroad to a point a few miles west of Bridgeport; Baird by road to Anderson, Tennessee; and Reynolds and Brannan by road to Shellmound.[211]

Turchin's brigade brought up the rear of Reynolds' division on the hike to the Tennessee, with Brannan a few miles behind. The Fourth Division marched from Decherd, August 16, reaching University the same day. At six in the morning on the seventeenth it left University and marched by way of Sweeden's Cove, Blue Springs, and Jasper. It

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[211] *Ibid.*, pp. 300-303; McKinney, p. 220.

reached the latter place on August 21. Part of Colonel Edward A. King's Second Brigade took possession of the Shellmound ferry on the following day. Meanwhile Wilder's First Brigade, which had been detached at University, shelled Chattanooga across the river from the city. The army now prepared to cross the Tennessee. McCook's spot was at Caperton's Ferry where he had built a pontoon bridge. He crossed on the twenty-seventh. Negley and Baird crossed on another pontoon span which Sheridan had built at Bridgeport, and Brannan went over at the mouth of Battle Creek on log rafts. King's and Turchin's brigades crossed at Shellmound during the night of August 31 and during the following day at the rate of eight hundred men per hour. They packed themselves into large boats and, with their colors over each vessel, floated across in the darkness and then the daylight.[212]

Rosecrans now had McCook, Stanley, and Thomas safely across the river, which had been considered a dangerous and formidable barrier. His next move was to try to get a strong force on Bragg's main line of communication with Marietta and Atlanta, Georgia; and he was aiming at a point somewhere between Dalton and Resaca. The main obstacles to this movement

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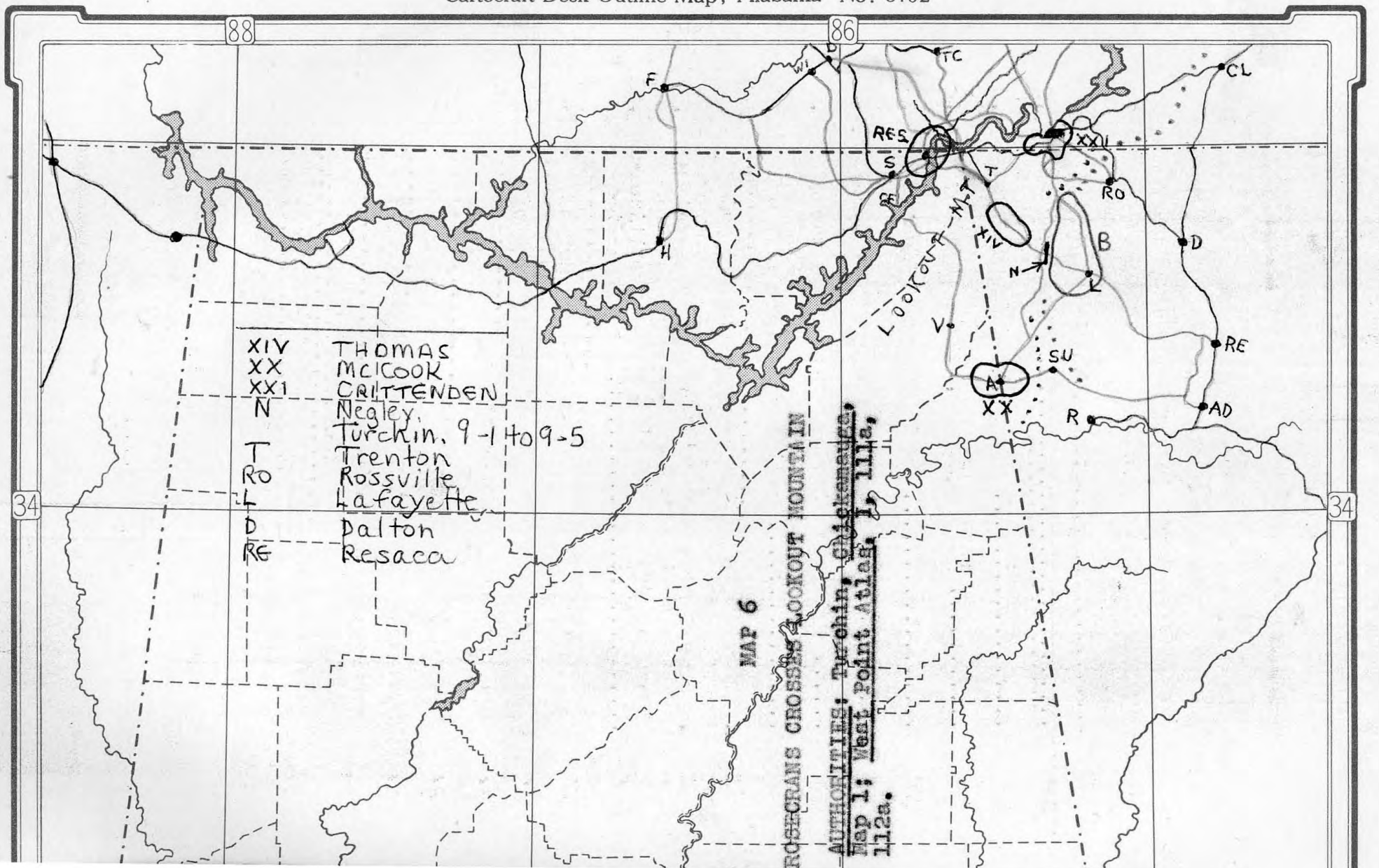
[212]Return, Third Brigade, Fourth Division, Fourteenth Corps, August 10, 1863, Records Relating to John B. Turchin, Record Group No. 94, National Archives; O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 439, 476; Pt. 3, 50-51, 57-58, 344; Lamers, p. 304; McKinney, pp. 221-23.

Cartocraft Desk Outline Map, Alabama No. 8102



were Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge behind it, which made rapid marching difficult and, more important, hid Bragg's army from Rosecrans. By September sixth, the XIV, XX, and XXI Corps all lay along the western slope of Lookout Mountain. To get on Bragg's rear Rosecrans had to separate his army--Critten, coming down to cross the river at Shellmound, to occupy Chattanooga; Thomas to cross Lookout and Missionary Ridge at Stevens' and Cooper's Gap, about twenty-six miles south of the city; and McCook to go to Valley Head and Winston's Gap, which was forty-six miles south of Chattanooga, with the cavalry reconnoitering in front of him.[213]

The mountains that screened Bragg from Rosecrans also hid Rosecrans from Bragg and thus the Army of the Cumberland was able to cross Lookout Mountain practically unopposed. But otherwise things were not going well for the Federals, and a large cloud of danger was rising over them. Bragg was receiving reenforcements which put him in a condition to strike hard at his enemy. After Burnside occupied Knoxville on September 6, the force opposing him, about ten thousand men under Major-General Simon Bolivar Buckner, had turned away from him to march south to Bragg's army. At the same time Joe Johnston sent two of his divisions east from Mississippi, and Lieutenant-General James Longstreet was hurrying

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[213]Lamers, p. 213.

three divisions of very tough veterans from the Army of Northern Virginia westward by railroad. When they all came in, Bragg would have about sixty thousand men to Rosecrans' fifty thousand. Also Burnside was dawdling in East Tennessee with no apparent intention of moving over to cooperate with Rosecrans.[214]

On September 4 Turchin moved his command (minus the Eighty-Ninth Ohio, which was still at Tracy City on garrison duty), across Raccoon Mountain, a high ridge just to the west of Lookout, and next day had it at Trenton. By the ninth it had begun to cross Lookout Mountain at Cooper's Gap. That day it reached a point four miles from the foot of Missionary Ridge. Thomas' headquarters and the Fourth division wagon train were between the Third Brigade and the Second which was camped at the western base of Missionary. The pass through the ridge was jammed with animals, men, and equipment; and Turchin did not get his command over it until the thirteenth. Brannan followed him with his division. Meanwhile Negley and Baird had already made their way through Stevens' Gap. Negley's was the lead division and before him lay Pigeon Mountain, behind which was the Army of Tennessee--somewhere. Negley headed for Dug Gap, the central opening in the moun-

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[214] Ibid., p. 305; Michael H. Fitch, The Chattanooga Campaign, With Especial Reference to Wisconsin's Participation Therein (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin History Commission, 1911), p. 66.

tain, and by September 9 he was in McLemore's Cove before the gap. He moved across the cove confidently, having no idea or information that enemy were anywhere nearby, until suddenly Rebel skirmishers posted in front of the gap opened up on his advance regiment. Negley formed the regiment in line and advanced to a small knoll driving the enemy back and then, looking ahead into Dug Gap, he got the shock of his life. Concentrated in the gap was a massive host which had his suddenly very small division virtually surrounded. The nearest Federal force, Baird, was not near enough, and so it looked like Negley was a goner.[215]

He called for help, and Thomas whisked Baird's division down into and across McLemore's Cove to support him. Any minute could have been the beginning of the end for Negley, but Bragg fumbled and fumed and never did launch the attack which would have crushed him. Thomas informed Rosecrans of Negley's plight, and that general began to realize that the army that he had supposed was retreating was actually preparing to attack. But it took several days for the point to sink in, and it wasn't until the thirteenth that he sent out orders to McCook and Crittenden to concentrate on Thomas. While that concentration took place, the three parts

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[215] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 476; Pt. 3, 511, 568-69, 601; Tucker, pp. 64-66.

of the Union army were still vulnerable, especially Crittenden toward whom Bragg's whole force was moving. It wasn't until the night of the seventeenth that the corps were in supporting distance of each other and the crisis was over. Bragg had never made the attack which could have brought him a smashing victory.[216]

Turchin marched out of Missionary Ridge at six in the morning on the fourteenth, and passing ahead of King moved out on the road to Pond Spring and Catlett's Gap. At Pond Spring, where West Chickamauga Creek crossed the road, he halted the brigade. Wilder with his brigade joined him here a short time later, and at about two in the afternoon Turchin took the Ninety-Second Illinois Mounted Infantry of Wilder and moved forward to a rough church or meeting house one half mile from Catlett's Gap, an opening in Pigeon Mountain north of Dug Gap.[217] In his report of the affair he wrote:

> Our few advanced men found the cavalry pickets posted beyond a corn-field at the gap, and when they came in sight of the pickets they saw a party of rebels on foot deploying along the edge of the woods to their right. Not wishing to bring on an engagement, I returned to camp. . . . Shots were exchanged between my men and the rebels throughout the entire march and at the gap.[218]

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[216] Ibid., pp. 66-71, 104-105.

[217] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 472-73, 476; Pt. 3, 624, 670-71, 673-74.

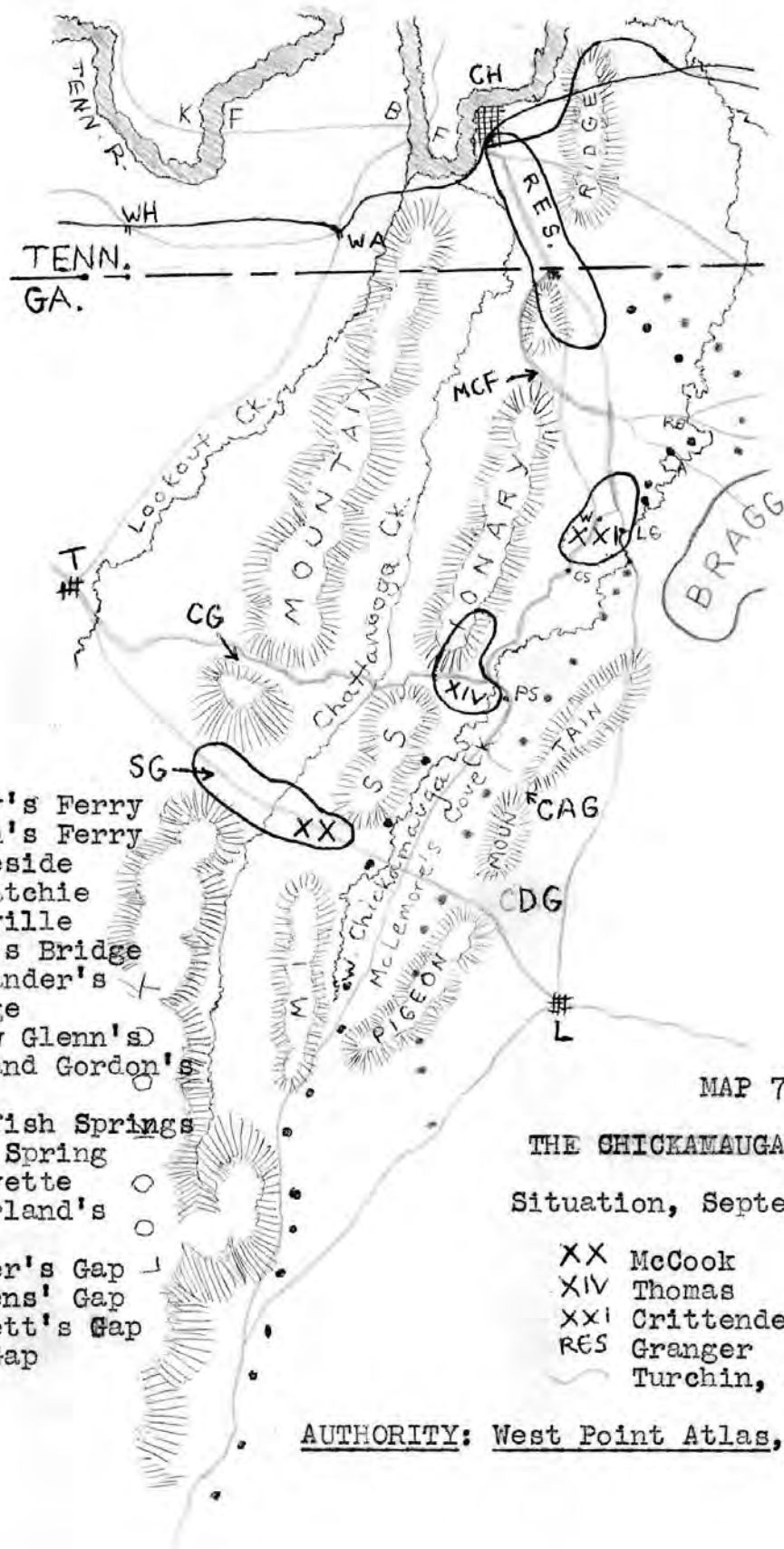
[218] Ibid., Pt. 1, 472-73.

Turchin kept the western end of Catlett's Gap plugged until the seventeenth when King's brigade took over this task, and Turchin backed up to a reserve position.

The River of Death

Bragg was moving northward and westward to cut off the Federal army from Chattanooga. On the eighteenth he began to cross West Chickamauga Creek at points from Lee and Gordon's Mill to Reed's Bridge, and early the following day all but three of his divisions (plus Longstreet's force which had yet to arrive by train) were on the west side of the creek on Crittenden's exposed left flank. Crittenden had moved south from Chattanooga on receipt of Rosecrans' concentration order. Rosecrans still was not exactly sure of Bragg's position, but he knew that the Army of the Cumberland had to shift farther north to protect its routes to Chattanooga. Therefore on the night of the eighteenth he ordered Thomas to march his whole corps behind the XXI and take position on the left of the army. Next morning Thomas was reaching his new position just as Bragg's advance elements were approaching it.

Most of the country in which the two armies were now operating was covered with thick forests, with an open patch here and there. It was not a fit place for a battle. Nevertheless they would fight there, these two giants, in the area north of Lee and Gordon's Mill between the Lafayette



KF Kelly's Ferry
BF Brown's Ferry
WH Whiteside
WA Wauhatchie
R Rossville
RB Reed's Bridge
A Alexander's Bridge
W Widow Glenn's
LG Lee and Gordon's Mill
CS Crawfish Springs
PS Pond Spring
L Lafayette
MCF McFarland's Gap
CG Cooper's Gap
SG Stevens' Gap
CAG Catlett's Gap
DG Dug Gap

MAP 7

THE CHICKAMAUGA CAMPAIGN

Situation, September 17-18

XX McCook
XIV Thomas
XXI Crittenden
RES Granger
Turchin, 9-5 to 9-30

AUTHORITY: West Point Atlas, I, 112a

road and West Chickamauga Creek. "Chickamauga" is an Indian word having various meanings in the different Indian dialects of the area. The upper Cherokee tribe had suffered a terrible smallpox epidemic some years before while camped on the banks of the placid, meandering stream, and as a result of this experience they gave it the name "River of Death." Now in 1863 boys in blue, butternut, and gray were going to give fresh significance to this ominous title.[219]

Thomas' night march was a perilous operation in the extreme with danger in the hole that he left behind him and in the vacuum ahead on Crittenden's left. If Bragg hit either of these points while Thomas was on the move, disaster could result. To give himself some measure of protection during the march, he posted Negley's division as a flank guard and left his campfires burning. The men in the columns stumbled along, kicking up clouds of dust--they would remember Chickamauga dust as they remembered Tullahoma mud. But they reached their objective next morning, and just in time too, for Bragg was about to attack. Brannan went off the Lafayette road to the east holding the army's extreme northern flank, and Baird moved in to his right with his right flank refused (bent back). These two divisions straddled the roads from Reed's and Alexander's bridges. Until the

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[219]Tucker, pp. 122.

rest of the XIV Corps came up there was a gap between Baird's right and the left of Crittenden's left division under Major-General John M. Palmer. Before it was filled Brannan and Baird became heavily engaged on their front.[220]

After moving to Crawfish Springs, Turchin waited there until the eighteenth while Thomas shuffled his divisions around. As some of the troops passed him, Turchin might have noticed some familiar faces. Timothy Stanley and John Beatty commanded brigades in Negley's division; and in Stanley's command were old reliables, the Nineteenth Illinois and Eighteenth Ohio. Geza Mihalotzy and the Twenty-Fourth Illinois were in Baird's division, as was the Thirty-Seventh Indiana. Both Stanley and Mihalotzy would be wounded in the battle that was beginning. At dawn of the eighteenth Chaplain James Lyle of the Eleventh Ohio gave a short, spirited sermon to the regiment; and Reynolds, passing by, stopped to listen. After Lyle had finished, the division commander walked up and warmly shook his hand expressing his happiness at having heard the talk. Turchin apparently wasn't around at that moment. Religion is one subject on which there is no record of his views. The absence itself suggests that he was not a believer, but the fact that he was probably a lone Orthodox adherent in the midst of people

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[220]McKinney, pp. 230-31.

of other faiths might have led him to keep his beliefs to himself.[221]

That night at seven Turchin took his brigade with the Fourth Division north along the Dry Valley Road. The confusion of the night marching took its toll on Lieutenant-Colonel Milward of the Eighteenth Kentucky. In the darkness a horse ran over him bruising him badly. However he managed to continue in command of the regiment till Sunday, September 20. At 8:00 A. M. the brigade halted at the Osborn house near Crawfish Spring long enough for the men to boil coffee. They could have boiled barrels of the stuff, for they didn't get under way again until after ten o'clock. Then Turchin formed them in double column and they preceded King's brigade to Widow Glenn's house, Rosecrans new headquarters. After a brief interval the division started for the McDonald house farther north. "While we were thus marching forward and backward heavy fighting was going on in the front and on our right flank [that would be east of the Lafayette road]."[222] On the way to McDonald's Turchin received an order from Reynolds to reverse direction, but then William Curtis, still an aide to Turchin and now a captain, brought

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[221]Tucker, pp. 332, 357, 394; Turchin, Chickamauga, p. 215; Reid, II, 85-86.

[222]Turchin, Second Report of the Battle of Chickamauga, September 26, 1863, O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 473.

word that Reynolds had already put the Ninety-Second Ohio and Eighteenth Kentucky into the battle line.[223]

At eleven o'clock or thereabouts unbeknownst to Turchin, riding at the head of his brigade, Reynolds had picked the last two regiments off the marching column and sent them into the woods to the east of the Lafayette road. Supported on his right by the Eighteenth Colonel Fearing led the Ninety-Second Ohio forward three or four hundred yards and drove back a line of Gray riflemen. Fearing, an Ohio businessman turned soldier for the duration, had fought at First Manassas as a private in a three-month Zouave unit, then returned home to organize the Ninety-Second. Now he kept his men in line in good order under a heavy artillery and musket fire from the front and left. At about three o'clock a charge by one of R. W. Johnson's brigades stopped the fire from the left, but just at that moment a musket bullet downed Fearing, and some men carried him to the rear. Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Putnam then took command of the regiment.[224]

At about eleven-thirty Turchin brought his other two regiments and Chess's battery to where the Eighteenth and Ninety-Second were fighting. Snatching a moment Colonel

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[223] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 473,476.

[224] Ibid., 477, 482; Reid, I, 940; II, 512-13.

Jones of the Thirty-Sixth Ohio scribbled in his pocket diary: "Off to the left; merciful Father, have mercy on me and my regiment, and protect us from injury and death."[225] As he wrote, Jones was about four hours away from the end of his life. Turchin put the Thirty-Sixth and Eleventh into line behind the other two regiments. Three-quarters of a mile to the left was Dodge's brigade of Johnson and nothing but trees between. It was hard to keep a connected line in the dense woods. Turchin had just put the rest of his men into position and was looking around to examine the situation when Brigadier-General William B. Hazen, commanding the Second Brigade, Palmer's division, which was to Turchin's right, sent over a request for one of his regiments "to relieve one or two of his regiments that were fighting in front, as they were out of ammunition."[226] Turchin responded with the Eleventh Ohio. Shortly after that he relieved the Ninety-Second with the Thirty-Sixth.[227]

The fighting in the woods east of the Lafayette road had become general as both sides fed new units into line. Bragg was still trying to get around the Union left, and Thomas was constantly shifting troops to meet this

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[225] Tucker, p. 149.

[226] Turchin, O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 474.

[227] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 474, 554-55.

threat. At about four o'clock Bragg suddenly switched direction and took a shot at Thomas right where his line stretched toward Crittenden's. The attack broke Van Cleve's division of Crittenden, but Hazen hurried over, drove it back, and restored order. This uncovered Turchin's right flank, while at about the same time an advance on the left bared his left. Suddenly he was alone, without supports. In his report he wrote, "I decided to take to the right, and formed in two lines on the left of General Cruft's brigade, of Palmer's division."[228]

He was just in time, for as he came over, Cruft's command was falling back, pushed by a strong Rebel assault. Cruft's men were in fact about to stampede, when Turchin came up. "There was wavering and indecision," he said, "and I ordered a charge."[229] Jones, seeing some of Cruft's men running to the rear, waved his sword and shouted to his men, "We'll let them know this is a regiment that can't run."[230] The Thirty-Sixth and the Eleventh spearheaded the counter-attack. Cruft faced his rear (in the retreat) regiment, the Ninetieth Ohio about and spotted his guns on a ridge to the right. Everybody gave a cheer and rushed forward.[231] Describing the charge Cruft wrote,

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[228] Ibid., 474 [229] Ibid. [230] Tucker, p. 149.

[231] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 476, 481-82.

> In sweeping to the front, the Ninetieth caught a portion of the Thirty-First Indiana and Second Kentucky, and the whole mass rolled down on the enemy, making a most successful charge. The rout of the enemy was complete, and the line was restored.[232]

Thomas Sedgewick still commanded the Second Kentucky; one wonders what his feelings were as he watched the man of whom he'd sat in judgment lead a charge to his succor.[233]

Jones was killed in the charge. He had been from Cincinnati and was graduated from West Point in 1859. For the next two years he served in Arizona and after the beginning of the war he joined the Army of the Potomac, with which he fought in the Seven Days' Battles. He then was an aide to Major-General Sumner until that officer's death in 1863. Jones had wanted to command a regiment from Ohio, and he got his wish when he was appointed to the command of the Thirty-Sixth. The first colonel of the Thirty-Sixth had been killed at Antietam, and now Jones also had been struck down. His successor was Lieutenant-Colonel Hiram Devol.[234]

Turchin and Cruft conferred and decided to withdraw their advanced forces one hundred yards back to Cruft's original position, and this was soon done. Then a messenger came to Turchin with orders from Reynolds for him to rejoin King on Palmer's right. That messenger must have had quite

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[232] Ibid., 731 [233] Ibid., 751, 753.

[234] Ibid., 481; Reid, I, 999; Tucker, p. 149.

a time finding Turchin, since Reynolds probably had no idea where he was. With the forests and the confused alignment of the units, it definitely was not a messenger's battle. Turchin marched his force behind Palmer's division and camped for the night just west of the Lafayette road with King.[235]

Summarizing the day's fighting Turchin noted that, "the position on the first day was so bad and so wooded that my battery could fire only three shots during the day's fighting, and those were fired at the rebel stragglers after we made the charge."[236] The battle was in fact a series of brigade actions, each in its own tree-enclosed compartment of noise, smoke, and flame. Reynolds' experience, having his two brigades on each end of Palmer's division, was typical of the jumbled-up nature of the day's activities. The morrow would be little better.

During the night Thomas' troops built log breastworks in front of them, while their commander talked with Rosecrans and other leaders at Widow Glenn's. Over on the Rebel side Longstreet was detraining his troops, and Bragg was telling him that the Confederate army would attack all along the line next morning, starting from right to left. His aim

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[235] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 474, 1070.

[236] Ibid., 474.

was still to get between Thomas and Chattanooga. Thomas was quite aware of this and between catnaps he invariably responded to questions from Rosecrans with: "I would strengthen the left."[237] The line of the Army of the Cumberland as Rosecrans rearranged it that night was as follows from left to right (north to south): Baird's, Johnson's, Palmer's, and Reynolds' divisions in a shallow crescent bulging eastward from the Lafayette road; Brannan somewhat to the rear west of the road, in good position to be moved to the left, if circumstances demanded it. Negley was in front and to the right of Brannan, and farther to the right were Sheridan and Jef. C. Davis of McCook. Wilder's brigade was also on the right. Crittenden's other two divisions, Wood's and Van Cleve's, were put in reserve behind the center of the line.[238]

On Sunday morning Reynolds moved Turchin's brigade forward and to the left into Poe's field to fill a gap left by the ubiquitous Hazen. Turchin's front line which had (from right to left) the Eleventh, Ninety-Second, and part of the Thirty-Sixth was the extreme right of Thomas' position and was bent back to the Lafayette road and faced southward. King's brigade was behind Turchin and somewhat to the right, connecting his left with Turchin's second line.

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[237] McKinney, p. 236. [238] Ibid.

At about ten o'clock Bragg's attack, rolling southward like a thunderclap, slammed into Turchin's front. For an hour the Rebels drove at Turchin's men, who crouched behind their improvised fortifications and poured out a deadly fire.[239] They were finally driven off with heavy loss and Turchin commented, "the breastworks of rails and timber protected our men. The enemy suffered severely."[240] A minor crisis occurred when the logs piled in front of the Eleventh Ohio caught fire, but a lieutenant and a few men pushed away and stamped out the burning timbers. At the end of this fight, at about eleven o'clock, Hubbard Milward had become so hobbled by the injuries he had received on Friday that he had to give over the command of the Eighteenth to Captain John B. Heltemes and retire.[241]

Action ceased on Turchin's front, but he soon began to feel pressure on his right and rear--something was wrong somewhere. Reynolds moved him more to the right to back up King, who was taking the brunt of the enemy attack. But thanks to a fierce, suicidal charge by the One Hundred and Fifth Ohio, King held on and the Fourth Division maintained its position.[242] The fighting again subsided and, as Palmer noted, "the positions held by the divisions of Reynolds,

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[239] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 474. [240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid., 478,480 [242] Ibid., 441.

Johnson, Baird, and my own were frequently assailed during the day but were maintained firmly by the willing men behind the barricades."[243]

The enemy movement on Turchin's right rear was a result of a monumental disaster which had happened to the Union right and center. Thomas, his line in front safe, had been trying to figure out a way to secure his exposed left flank. He had sent repeated calls to Rosecrans for reenforcements for this end. He was a stolid, unpretentious man, but he did not lack imagination, and thought of a large enemy force rolling up his command from the left rear chilled him. He specifically wanted his other division, Negley's, back, but Negley was in line and could only manage to send two brigades, Beatty's and Stanley's. In fighting on the left these two were badly chewed up and Stanley was wounded, but with Baird's troops and other units that Thomas scraped up, they held on. Among the units fighting with Baird was Colonel Sidney Barnes' brigade of Van Cleve's division, which contained the Ninety-Ninth Ohio. The commander of the Ninety-Ninth was another figure from Turchin's court-martial--Peter Swaine, who was now a colonel of volunteers.[244]

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[243] Ibid., 714-15.

[244] McKinney, pp. 239-42, 246-47.

Thomas had actually not solved his problem on the left. He had only deferred it for a while. He asked Rosecrans for more men. The situation was becoming alarming to Rosecrans. He had ordered Brannan to take his division to Thomas, and he thought that all of Negley's had gone to the left; yet Thomas was still asking for more men. Now Captain Sanford Kellogg of Thomas' staff came to Widow Glenn's with another request for reenforcements and the startling news that there was a hole in the Union line to the right of Reynolds. This was wrong, for Brannan was there. Brannan had been unable to move to the left because of the presence of a strong enemy force on his front, and he had sent off only Van Derveer's brigade. He was between Reynolds and Wood, slightly recessed, which was probably why Kellogg didn't see him as he rode across the Federal rear. But Rosecrans thought that Brannan had left and thus he accepted Kellogg's report without checking on it.[245]

Rosecrans thus believed that there was a division-wide gap between Wood and Reynolds. He sent the following order to Wood to fill it:

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[245]Fitch, 105-106; McKinney, p. 257.

"Headquarters Department of the Cumberland
September 20--10:45 a. m.

Brigadier-General WOOD, Commanding Division, &c.:

The general commanding directs that you close up on Reynolds as fast as possible, and support him.

Respectfully, &c.,

FRANK S. BOND
Major, and Aide-de-Camp."[246]

Wood received this at about eleven o'clock, and it puzzled him considerably. He simply could not "close up on Reynolds," because Brannan was in the way. He could "support" him, but this would mean pulling his command out of line and marching behind Brannan to come in on Turchin's rear. With a strong enemy force, which he knew was in his front, this was an extremely dangerous maneuver. But earlier in the day Rosecrans had rudely and violently criticized him to his face for not obeying an order promptly. So Wood decided to move out of line and ordered his division into marching column.[247]

The unfortunate part of all this was that, while Wood was mulling over Rosecrans' order, Longstreet was making final preparations for a powerhouse smash at the Union center. For his attack he formed his men in column rather

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[246] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 635.

[247] Ibid., McKinney, pp. 257-58; Tucker, pp. 206-207.

than the lines which the Confederates had been using--as Turchin noted, "Longstreet's experience in these matters was much larger than Polk's or Hill's."[248] His column was two brigades wide and was headed by the division of Brigadier-General Bushrod R. Johnson's division. It was two divisions deep with a division flanking it on either side. The total number of men in this powerful force was about 23,000. A few minutes after Wood began his movement Longstreet started his, and it rushed right through the hole Wood had just opened and caught his brigades in the rear in marching column. Wood's command was shattered in minutes. Brannan's position was overrun, his men scattered or driven back. Davis and Sheridan, moving in from the south, also caught the fury of the Rebel onslaught and were dispersed. Van Cleve's division disintegrated. One of his brigade commanders, Sam Buell (no relation to Don Carlos), said "My little brigade seemed as if swept from the field."[249] Everything to the right of Turchin was either swept away or driven northward toward a series of small nobs later named Snodgrass Hill. The Confederates were moving now, and it didn't look

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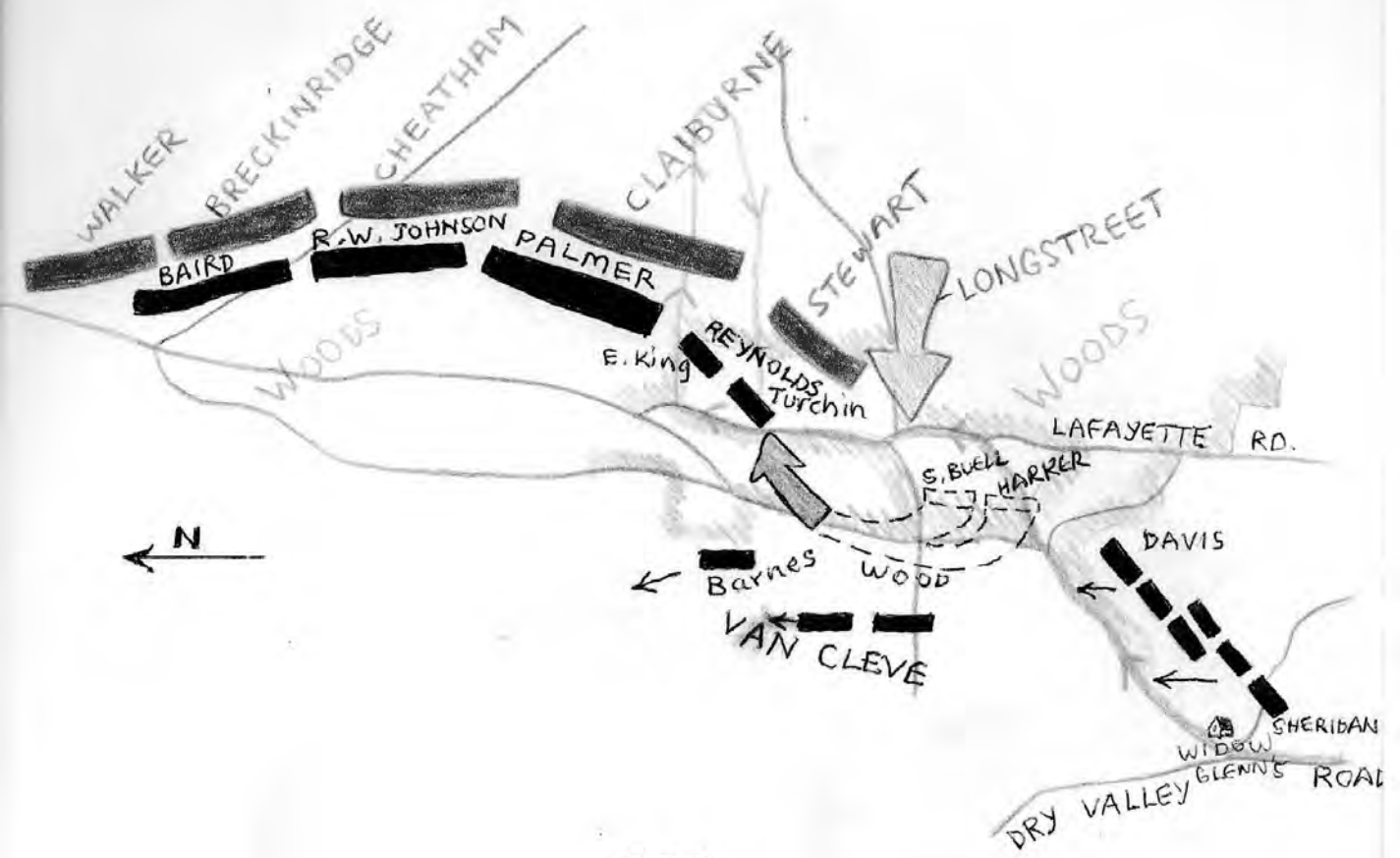
[248] Chickamauga, p. 116.

[249] Tucker, p. 286.



MAP 8

CHICKAMAUGA: WOOD OBEYS THE FATAL ORDER

Longstreet's Column Advancing
Wood in the Act of "Supporting" Reynolds
Movements of Turchin's Brigade from Nightfall, September 18, to Afternoon, September 20

AUTHORITIES: Tucker, p. 257; West Point Atlas, I, 114a; Official Atlas, Plates XLVI, XLVII.

like they'd stop short of the Ohio River.[250]

There were a few units which managed to maintain their organization as they retreated and these began to piece together a new line on the western edge of Snodgrass called Horseshoe Ridge. One of the first of these was the Eighty-Second Indiana commanded by Colonel Morton C. Hunter of Brannan's division. Others of Brannan's division soon arrived, and Brannan himself came up to direct operations. Charles Harker brought in the remains of his brigade of Wood's division and Timothy Stanley's brigade came over from the north. Individual soldiers whose commands had dissolved but who had not yet had enough of fighting trudged over to join their comrades and stiffen the ever-growing Horseshoe line.[251] Turchin, long a fascinated student of the American volunteer and his independent ways wrote that, "this spontaneous rally on Horseshoe Ridge was an opportunity for just such independent spirits to join the crowd and to fight in their own way and not under subordination and strict orders. And," he added, "they fought splendidly."[252] By one o'clock, as Bushrod Johnson paused to regroup his forces in front of

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[250]The best book on Chickamauga is Tucker, and the best account of the disintegration of the Federal center and right is in his chapters twenty-four, twenty-five, and twenty-six.

[251]Tucker, pp. 286-87, 328-29.

[252]Chickamauga, p. 132.

Horseshoe Ridge, Brannan had about 2,000 men in position on the hill.

The closed-in, wooded nature of the battlefield saved Turchin and the brigades to his left. When the Longstreet Express rolled over the positions to Turchin's right, it amputated the Federal line just south of him. But because of the trees, the advancing Confederates did not see his command clearly as they charged to the rear and around behind his right flank. Reynolds' only contact with them was King's action when the One Hundred and Fifth Ohio made its charge, digging into the ribs of Longstreet's column as it moved by. If the Rebels couldn't see them, Turchin's men couldn't see much either, and this, too, worked to their advantage. On more open ground Turchin's and King's men would have seen the divisions on their right disappear and would probably have fallen back themselves. In turn the men to the left would have dropped back, and thus the whole Union line would have given way. It was just as important to the safety of the army for the troops east of the Lafayette road to hold their positions as it was for the men on Snodgrass to maintain theirs. But on that unreal twentieth of September Turchin hung out exposed in those woods all afternoon without ever receiving the fatal thrust.

For the rest of the afternoon Longstreet sent repeated uncoordinated assaults against Horseshoe Ridge and

Snodgrass Hill, but the Federals managed to beat all of them off. Thomas was now on Snodgrass shifting troops to meet new crises and holding the line together by the sheer force of his presence as much as anything. The only outward indication of inner worry that he gave was to fiddle nervously with his full beard. By one o'clock the beard was beginning to resemble a bird's nest, as it seemed that Longstreet would break the Union line to pieces. Then Gordon Granger arrived with his Reserve Corps, 7,500 men, and 90,000 rounds of ammunition. Granger's one whole division under Brigadier-General James B. Steedman came up just in time to beat back a Rebel attack off Horseshoe Ridge, and his other brigade led by Colonel Daniel McCook (a relative of the commander of the XX Corps) was posted at Cloud House to keep open the Lafayette road to Rossville and the Ridge road to McFarland's Gap. More people were coming in. Van Derveer brought his brigade, and Garfield arrived with two of Thomas' aides who brought more ammunition with them. Now Thomas got from him his first explanation of what had happened to the right of the army. Garfield also told him that he was not likely to get any more men or ammunition and gave him an order from Rosecrans to withdraw immediately. Confederate forces were appearing on the left of Baird again, but Thomas decided to wait until it was dark before pulling out. It was about

five o'clock.[253]

Crisis was now coming to the men in front of the barricades east of the Lafayette road. While Longstreet made his assaults against Horseshoe, Bishop Polk, who commanded the Confederate right wing, had held his troops back. But now as the sun sank he attacked the Federals on his front and in this move got one division on the Lafayette road north of Baird's position. As the fighting continued the situation of the Union forces there became increasingly perilous. Thomas had not been there for several hours and no one knew what was happening to the rest of the army. Reynolds' men were low on ammunition, having become separated from their wagons. Colonel King was killed by a Rebel sharpshooter as the Confederate fire increased. Lieutenant-Colonel Devol heard Reynolds say that he would have to surrender.[254]

A half hour later, at about five-thirty, Reynolds received an order from Thomas to begin the general withdrawal to Rossville. He faced his two lines to the right and started them in that direction. Thomas meanwhile was riding over from Snodgrass Hill to supervise the retreat. On the way two soldiers looking for water told him that

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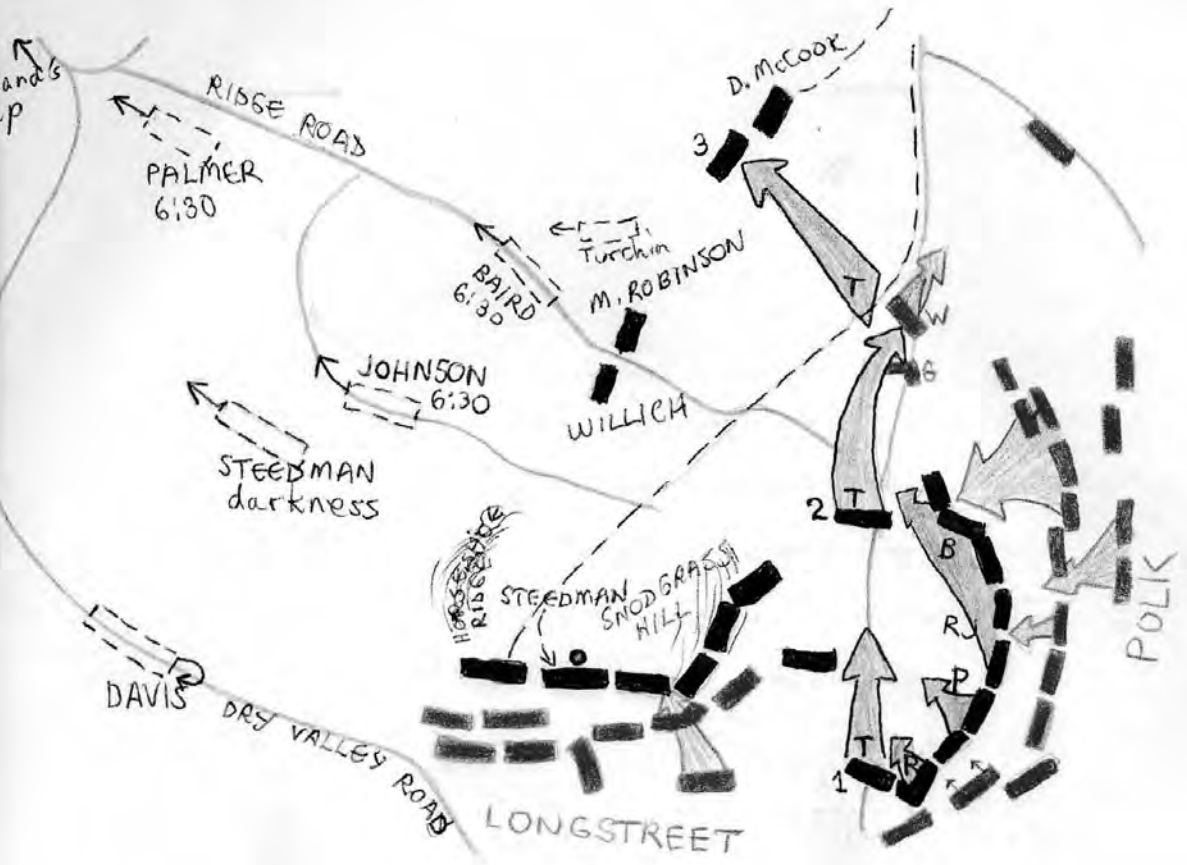
[253]Tucker, pp. 337-48; McKinney, pp. 252-53.

[254]Tucker, pp. 359-60; O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 1070.



MAP 910

CHICKAMAUGA: TURCHIN'S CHARGE TO THE REAR

urchin's Charge to the Rear
- T Turchin's Brigade
- 1 About 5:00 P. M.
- 2 About 5:30 P. M.
- 3 About 7:00 P. M.

ederal Withdrawl
- P Palmer
- RJ Johnson
- B Baird

onfederate Units
- W Walthal
- G Govan

ADDENDA, MAP 9

- A Athens College
- CH Courthouse
- M McKinny Farm
- FG Fairgrounds
- R Railroad Station

there were enemy troops advancing through the woods northwest of Baird's left flank. When he reached the Lafayette road, he met Reynolds and told him about this Rebel force.[255] Pointing northward he said, "There they are; clear them out."[256] By this time Reynolds' second brigade, now commanded by Colonel Milton S. Robinson, was reduced to a few hundred men, and the job of driving back the threatening enemy force fell to Turchin. Turchin was uncertain as to the exact location of the enemy and he went up to Thomas and asked him where they were. Thomas pointed again--"Right there in the woods."[257]

The Confederate force thus indicated was the division of Brigadier-General St. John R. Liddell, Walker's Corps. Earlier in the war Liddell had served on Hardee's staff, after which he had transferred to line service and rose to division command. His division was a small one of two brigades, Colonel Daniel C. Govan's and Brigadier-General Edward C. Walthall's. Walthall's brigade had been roughly handled on the eighteenth by Wilder's men with their repeaters at Alexander's bridge. Commenting on this engagement which lasted only forty-five minutes, Liddell wrote:

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[255]Turchin, Chickamauga, pp. 147-48.

[256]O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 442.

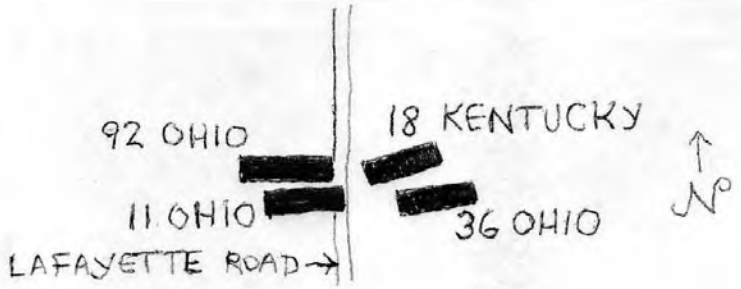
[257]Turchin, Chickamauga, p. 148.

"Our loss was 105 in killed and wounded, and I can only account for this disproportion from the efficiency of this new weapon."[258] Since that time Liddell's command had been in some hard fights, but had not lost a man as a prisoner. Now as the woods darkened, it was to be jolted as it had not been before.[259]

Liddell's division had advanced along the Lafayette road to near McDonald's house when Thomas pointed it out to Turchin. There was no time to lose--one division was there now, but others might join it. Turchin's double line was stretched across the Lafayette road facing south. He faced

MAP 10

POSITION OF TURCHIN'S LINES
WHEN HE FACED THEM ABOUT



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[258] O. R., XXX, Pt. 2, 251. [259] Ibid., 254, 275.

it about, to the rear, and barked "Forward." The men sent up a mighty yell and rushed forward, northward, toward Liddell's position. Meanwhile one of Dan McCook's batteries on a hill north of the Ridge road had opened up on Liddell, silencing his guns and punishing his infantry. Some of Baird's guns also joined in. Turchin's men ran a mile through the woods, then popped out into an open field in front of Liddell's lines and smashed into his brigades, driving them back in confusion.[260] They hit Govan first--"the brigade retreated in considerable confusion."[261] Walthall's line was partly in the woods, and the attack took him by surprise there. The blue soldiers dashed out of the trees, cut off and captured his skirmishers, and drove back his main line. One of these prisoners was Colonel J. I. Scales, commander of the Thirtieth Mississipi. The Eighteenth Kentucky captured two guns from Govan's men but was unable to bring them off, as their horses had been shot.[262]

Turchin was riding behind his lines as they moved forward. He stopped for a moment to direct some of his soldiers who had taken cover with some prisoners behind a

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[260] Ibid., Pt. 1, 253, 256, 275, 475, 479, 481, 882-83.

[261] Govan, Ibid., Pt. 2, 260.

[262] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 479; Pt. 2, 275-76.

small log shed when a solid shot smacked into his horse. Down went horse and Turchin, in that order, and before the latter could untangle himself from the former, the advancing brigade had moved well out ahead of him. As he tells it,

> No staff officer being near, Turchin was obliged to run behind the brigade through a stubble-field, endeavoring by motioning with his arms to direct the officers of his command to turn to the left, and thus to again join the troops posted on the ridge.[263]

The sight of the stubby Turchin running through the field waving his arms would have been comical if it weren't for the grim seriousness of the situation: the Union army could not be withdrawn in safety until Liddell was pushed back. The officers apparently understood Turchin's wigwags, for the brigade did move to the left and join Dan McCook's troops on the ridge. A soldier of the Ninety-Second Ohio brought Turchin an artillery horse with a saddle and he mounted and rode to rejoin his command.[264]

On the ridge Turchin learned that Reynolds had mistakenly led about one hundred and fifty of his men, mostly from the Eleventh Ohio, further straight ahead. This force safely rejoined the brigade as darkness was closing in. In his report Reynolds explained his error this way: "I understood that this movement was intended to open the

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[263] Turchin, Chickamauga, p. 151.

[264] Ibid., pp. 151-52.

road to Rossville for the army, and did not then know of any other road to that point."[265] Reynolds had taken his little band two miles past its objective. It is a wonder that they weren't all captured.

Milton Robinson marched with the depleted Second Brigade to a position on the Ridge road next to August Willich's brigade of R. W. Johnson's division. Confederate Liddell's used-up regiments retreated a half-mile, removing the cloud from Thomas' withdrawal plan. Covered by Turchin, Dan McCook, Robinson, and Willich, first Palmer, then Johnson and Baird, followed by the troops on Snodgrass Hill, would retreat to Rossville. It was a sticky business withdrawing while still engaged, and many units lost heavily, but under the circumstances the movement was handled quite well. However through an oversight of Granger most of three regiments were captured on Horseshoe Ridge after the rest of the Union forces had retreated. They were the Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Michigan and Turchin's Eighty-Ninth Ohio. Steedman had picked the Eighty-Ninth up at Tracy City and added it to his division when he marched to Rossville. Turchin reached Rossville at eight that night, and at seven the next morning the few men left of the Eighty-Ninth rejoined the brigade.[266]

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[265] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 442. For Turchin's comments on this adventure see below, p.

[266] Tucker, pp. 364-72; O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 477.

From Rossville Rosecrans pulled his aching legions back to Chattanooga followed warily by Bragg, as both sides glumly counted their casualties. Losses were appalling. The Army of Tennessee lost about 21,000 killed, wounded, and missing; while the Army of the Cumberland lost approximately 16,000. The Fourteenth Corps lost 6,114 men, and Reynolds' loss was (including Wilder's brigade) ninety-three killed, six hundred and eighty-five wounded, and one hundred and seventy-six missing. The Eleventh Ohio suffered the least of Turchin's brigade with sixty-three casualties. The other regiments were in the eighties and nineties; and Turchin counted a total loss (excluding the Eighty-Ninth Ohio) of thirty killed, two hundred and twenty-seven wounded, and eighty-six men missing.[267] At the end of Colonel Lane's report was a further melancholy note: "Our hospital arrangements were a total failure; neither surgeons, hospital corps, nor ambulances were to be found."[268]

In his later years as Turchin meditated on the great days of the war, he was wont to consider his performance at Chickamauga the highlight of his Union army service, and judging from the praise he received he was probably right.

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[267] Tucker, pp. 386-89; O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 173, 179, 477.

[268] Ibid., 481.

The charge to the rear in the waning light of the twentieth received particular attention. Thomas, who had witnessed it wrote, "In this splendid movement more than 200 prisoners were captured and sent to the rear."[269] Thomas later recommended Turchin for promotion as a result of his fine work on the nineteenth and twentieth. Garfield who had ridden to the Lafayette road with Thomas and who, like Thomas Sedgewick the day before, had watched the man whom he had judged make a dramatic, saving charge, telegraphed Rosecrans at 8:00 P. M., "Turchin charged the rebel lines and took 500 prisoners; became enveloped, swept around behind their lines and cut his way out in another place, but abandoned his prisoners."[270] Charles A. Dana, Stanton's personal field commissar at army headquarters saw Garfield's message and telegraphed to his boss, "Turchin charged through the rebel lines with the bayonet, and becoming surrounded, forced his way back again."[271] Such is the stuff of which history is made. Turchin took two hundred prisoners; Turchin took five hundred prisoners; they were sent to the rear; they were abandoned. About the only thing these people agreed upon was that Turchin had done very well. Thomas' account, as would be

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[269] Ibid., 254.

[270] Ibid., 144-45.

[271] Dana to Stanton, Chattanooga, 2:00 P. M., September 21, 1863, Ibid., 195.

expected of that reliable officer, was correct.

There were two other tributes which Turchin probably valued just as much, though for different reasons. Rather unusually one came from Lieutenant-Colonel Devol of the Thirty-Sixth Ohio. At the close of his official report he wrote, "The success of this regiment and brigade is not owing to its discipline and efficiency alone, but to its confidence in the skill of the brigade commander."[272] This could either be apple-polishing or a sincere compliment from a subordinate to his superior; it is difficult to determine which. But it is certain that no amount of sugar-coated words could save Devol from Turchin's wrath if he didn't do his job properly. The final palm came years later from an enemy, Longstreet, who had brought the Army of the Cumberland to the brink of destruction. Recalling that hectic afternoon when his troops strove to knock Thomas off Snodgrass Hill, Longstreet wrote,

> As no reports came to the [Confederate] left from commanding general or from the right wing, the repulse of Liddell's division was thought to indicate the strong holding of the enemy along his intrenched front line, and I thought that we should wait to finish the battle on the morrow.[273]

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[272] O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 482.

[273] James Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1960), p. 454.

Turchin had not only accomplished his purpose of clearing the way for the Federal withdrawal, but from what Longstreet says here, he also unwittingly relieved some of the pressure on the troops of Snodgrass.

The Army of the Cumberland retreated all the way to the confines of Chattanooga, and Rosecrans even yielded Lookout Mountain to the enemy, with the result that Bragg was able to put it under virtual siege. In the next days dissatisfaction among some of the generals broke out. Sheridan, Wood, Davis, and Johnson wanted more capable leaders placed over them, their confidence in McCook and Crittenden having been left on the field of Chickamauga. The War Department placated them by merging the XX and XXI Corps into one corps, the IV, which Granger was assigned to command. For one reason or another other changes were made, and the net result was that two corps commanders, three division commanders, and eleven brigade commanders left the Army of the Cumberland while it was sitting in Chattanooga. One of these was Reynolds who became chief-of-staff of the army when Garfield left to take a seat in Congress.[274]

Turchin had become thoroughly disenchanted with Reynolds after watching what he considered to be his poor handling of the Fourth Division on September nineteenth and

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[274]McKinney, pp. 276-77.

twentieth. Reynolds wrote his official report of the battle several days before he received Turchin's report. This report was unfair to Turchin's brigade in several respects, and if Turchin read it, it irritated him. Newspapers often printed battle reports, and Turchin might have read Reynolds in one of them or in some other source. Turchin wrote a book on Chickamauga years after the war and one of the features of it was the thorough roasting he gave Reynolds.

The book was evidently to be the first of a series by Turchin to be published by the Fergus Publishing Company of Chicago under the general title Noted Battles for the Union. Among the planned books were Missionary Ridge and a study of life in Russia based on Turchin's observations. But these plans were nullified by Turchin's failing health, and so the only volume issued was Chickamauga, which came out in 1888. The book is one of the best studies of the battle ever published. Glenn Tucker, whose recent study is probably the best work on Chickamauga, made frequent use of it, and described Turchin as "one of the best students of method in the Northern army."[275] Turchin's book doesn't have anything like the breadth of Tucker's since his sources of information were less extensive, and his purpose in writing differed in part from Tucker's. In addition to giving an account of

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[275]Tucker, p. 260.

the battle, Turchin pointed out military lessons, twenty-six of them, that were drawn from the conduct of the battle and in some cases its mismanagement. In doing so he stepped on a lot of toes, for he second-guessed just about every leading general except Thomas. Besides, Turchin always wrote from a definite point of view which narrowed his judgments at times. The book is written in the same pungent style of Turchin's official reports, and by 1888 Turchin had acquired greater ease in the English language. There are, however, a few bad slips which suggest that Turchin or the Fergus proofreader might have profitably spent a few days in the woodshed with a grammar book.[276]

Among the generals who felt the sting of Turchin's acid criticism were Palmer, Hazen, and Wood, the latter for his conduct immediately after he received "the order" from Rosecrans, but Turchin saved his best shots for his division commander, Reynolds. Concerning the actions of the nineteenth which put the Second and Third Brigades on opposite ends of Palmer's division, he wrote one long, condemnatory sentence:

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[276]The twenty-six lessons are on pp. 167-84. One of the more noticeable errors in grammar is to be found on p. 26. Turchin drew an excellent set of maps to accompany the text of his book, but unfortunately the copy of it that I used was missing half of them and the rest were badly creased and torn.

> This action of separating his own small division in two parts, and placing those parts on the opposite flank of another division, not even belonging to his own corps; removing them from his own control; and leaving them without anyone to direct their movements, while he remained in the rear and trying to organize something out of nothing, does not look like generalship.[277]

Reynold's, he went on, should have put both of his brigades on Palmer's right. They would have had better effect there, for there was where the problem was. Concerning the charge of the twentieth Turchin attacked Reynolds' insistence upon calling the force that made it "the division" when it was only Turchin's brigade that made the charge. As Turchin pointed out, and Thomas stated this in his report, what remained of the Second Brigade was posted personally by the commander of the Fourteenth Corps after Turchin's men had started on their charge.[278]

So far Reynolds had only been described as careless, inaccurate, and inexpert, but when Turchin came to his "lost" advance with one hundred and fifty of his (Turchin's) men, he criticized Reynolds so savagely that the Fourth Division commander came out looking like the biggest boob that ever wore boots. Describing what had happened while the charge was in progress, Turchin wrote,

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[277] Turchin, Chickamauga, p. 75.

[278] Ibid., pp. 150-51; O. R., XXX, Pt. 1, 254.

Reynolds, at this time, did not know what became of Turchin and his brigade.

> Looking neither to the sides nor rear, Gen. Reynolds passed a clump of timbers, skirting the left side of the Chattanooga [Lafayette] road, and there saw a body of rebels in front and a larger one on flank. It was Forrest's dismounted cavalry. Reynolds now found that he was in a tight place and that the balance of the brigade had disappeared. He even imagined that the troops on the ridge [Turchin's and Dan McCook's] were not ours, but rebel.[279]

After a few anxious minutes Reynolds saw some of McCook's men laden with canteens coming to find water, and then he knew that those were friendly troops on the ridge; he quickly took his force there. Turchin then commented at length on Reynolds' explanation for his unscheduled detour which is quoted above:[280]

> A major-general declaring that he did not know that there were any other roads leading from our position to Rossville, except the Lafayette-and-Chattanooga road, while fighting two days in a position which covered those other roads to Rossville and Chattanooga, shows one of two things: either that he was grossly ignorant of military matters, or that he was inexcusably indifferent to what interested not only the major-generals but also every intelligent private in the army, namely, how our army could reach Chattanooga. Was it possible for our army to retreat by the main Chattanooga road when it was on its flank and in possession of the enemy, as Reynolds himself at last found out?[281]

Turchin, who was always so careful and thorough in examining

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[279] Chickamauga, p. 152. [280] Ibid., pp. 152-53.

[281] Ibid., 152.

the ground around surrounding his position, was particularly incensed by what he considered Reynolds' dereliction in this matter and by the fact that he (Turchin) might have lost one hundred and fifty men because of it. More or less finished with Reynolds' paper, he concluded, "It is a remarkable report."[282]

Thus it can be seen that Turchin wasn't particularly unhappy when Reynolds transferred to Thomas' staff.

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[282] Ibid., p. 153.

CHAPTER VI

MISSIONARY RIDGE

Brown's Ferry

Chickamauga was Rosecrans' last battle with the Army of the Cumberland. Stanton had put Grant in supreme command in the West, and Grant replaced Rosecrans with Thomas. The reenforcements which Rosecrans could have used a month ago were now on the way and some had already arrived. Major-General Joseph Hooker brought two hard-fighting corps--Major-General Oliver Otis Howard's XI and Major-General Henry Warner Slocum's XII--west from the Army of the Cumberland. Sherman was bringing some of his rough-and-ready boys from the Army of the Tennessee across Northern Alabama from Mississippi. Hooker's force was incorporated into the Army of the Cumberland, but Sherman's force, when it arrived, remained independent.[283]

Thomas first job was to get a satisfactory supply line running into Chattanooga. The existing one went by rail from Nashville to Bridgeport and thence by a round-about

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[283]McKinney, pp. 268-69.

route northward and finally southward into Chattanooga. This route was poorly maintained and subject to enemy cavalry attacks. The situation was bad, and from Washington it looked like the Army of the Cumberland might be starved into surrender. Thomas wasn't quite so worried. With characteristic energy he reconditioned and improved the rail line to Bridgeport, so that it began to work smoothly. Then he prepared to open a shorter route from Bridgeport to Chattanooga. His chief engineer, Brigadier-General William F. Smith, generally known as "Baldy" devised a plan for a line via Brown's Ferry and Wauhatchie; and Thomas gave orders that this be carried into effect.[284]

In the general shake-up which followed Chickamauga, Turchin was assigned three new regiments; and his brigade was transferred to the Third Division of the Fourteenth Corps commanded by Absolom Baird. The other division commanders of the XIV were R. W. Johnson, the First, and Jef. C. Davis, the Second; and the corps was now under the leadership of John Palmer. The division commanders of Granger's IV Corps were General Cruft, the First; Sheridan, the Second; and Wood, the Third. The rest of the army consisted of Howard's and Slocum's corps. Brannan had become chief of artillery and Baldy Smith was chief engineer.[285]

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[284] Ibid., pp. 279-80. [285] Fitch, pp. 165-66, 169.

Turchin's new division commander, Baird, was regular army all the way. He served a stretch in the adjutant-general's department at the beginning of the war, and he tended to be a little finicky about details. He was irritating his new corps commander, Palmer, who was not a West Pointer but had risen to his position largely on merit, and Palmer went to Thomas and asked to have him transferred. Thomas answered, "Well, General, wait until we have a battle, and then if you want Baird relieved I will do it." After the stipulated battle had come and gone Thomas asked Palmer, "How about relieving Baird?"

"No. Baird is a fighter. He devils the Rebs more than he ever did me."[286]

Baird was a fighter, and Turchin was a fighter, and they both were well-educated in their profession. As a result they worked well together.

The three regiments which were added to the First Brigade (which Turchin's was now designated) had been in Brannan's division and did nothing to lower the fighting quality of their new command. They were the Seventeenth and Thirty-First Ohio and the Eighty-Second Indiana. Their commanders were respectively Captain Benjamin H. Showers, Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick W. Lister, and Colonel Morton

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[286] McKinney, p. 277.

C. Hunter. The Eighty-Second, as stated above,[287] had been one of the "founders" of the line on Horseshoe Ridge that fateful September 20. The Seventeenth had been with Rosecrans in West Virginia as a three-month regiment, and then as a three-year unit had compiled an excellent combat record which included such names as Mill Springs and Stone's River. At Chickamauga it had been crushed under Longstreet's assault, and now the highest-ranking officer present for duty was Captain Showers. The Thirty-First had a similar record, but had had better luck at Chickamauga. On the morning of the nineteenth it had recaptured five Federal guns from the unfortunate Walthall. Next day it fought on Snodgrass Hill. Lister commanded it at Chickamauga, for the colonel of the regiment, Moses B. Walker, was under arrest. But Walker came from the rear and served as a volunteer on Brannan's staff until his spine and back were injured by an exploding shell. His action that afternoon earned him a brevet for gallantry. Whatever were the reasons for Walker's arrest he eventually returned to command the Thirty-First, and later he succeeded Turchin in command of the First Brigade.[288]

The other brigades in Baird's division were Colonel

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[287] See page 150.

[288] O. R., XXXI, Pt. 1, 137; Pt. 3, 548-49, 555; Reid, II, 122-25, 209-10; Tucker, pp. 136, 266, 268, 332.

Ferdinand Van Derveer's splendid Second and Colonel Edward Phelps' Third which was the weakest of the three, that is to say, it was only excellent. All things considered, the Third Division was the closest thing to a crack division that the Army of the Cumberland had. The only trouble was that these brigades were badly understrength, the losses of Chickamauga not having been replaced. Phelps had seven regiments but only 2,165 men; Van Derveer had seven regiments and 2,116 men. Turchin likewise had seven regiments with only 2,175 men in them. By contrast his Eighth Brigade of the Northern Alabama campaign of 1862 contained four regiments, but it had a strength of 3,428 men. State governors, instead of sending replacements to replenish existing regiments, continued to organize new ones, because of the additional patronage the commissioning of officers for the new units gave them. If an older regiment wanted to get replacements, it had to recruit its own. For example, the Eleventh Ohio went into the Battle of Chickamauga short three officers who were in Ohio trying to recruit more men for the regiment.[289]

Turchin's brigade participated in the opening of the Brown's Ferry route. At six-thirty in the evening of the twenty-sixth of October Turchin took his men out of

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[289]Fitch, p. 166; O. R., X, Pt. 2, 85; XXX, Pt. 1, 479.

Chattanooga and across a pontoon bridge near the city and marched them to a point in the woods near the ferry where he bivouacked. At three next morning Hazen with part of his brigade floated down the river in fifty pontoons and two flatboats. The boats were commanded by Timothy Stanley.[290] Meanwhile Turchin's force waited. A correspondent with it noted, "It was really remarkable how quiet the 3,000 men and hundreds of animals, that bivouacked huddled together near the bank were kept for the next few hours."[291] Stanley landed Hazen's force just before dawn, then came over and took across the rest of his brigade which had marched overland with Turchin. Then Turchin's brigade was ferried across the river. Together Hazen and Turchin established a good beachhead on the farther side of the river without too much trouble, and a detachment of engineers assigned to the task began to build a pontoon bridge. This they finished at 4:30 P. M. the same day. Meanwhile Hooker drove eastward from Bridgeport with the Eleventh and part of the Twelfth Corps and opened the road from Bridgeport to Brown's Ferry. His advance guard reached the ferry at three in the afternoon on the twenty-eighth.[292]

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[290] Ibid., XXXI, Pt. 1, 77-80, 84.

[291] Villard, II, 219.

[292] O. R., XXXI, Pt. 1, 41, 78, 80, 84-85, 88, 136-37.

The opening of what was called "The Cracker Line" cheered up the army in Chattanooga. Supplies could now come in with a certain amount of regularity. Thomas, writing to Halleck on the twenty-seventh said that the affair was a "complete success and reflected great credit on all concerned."[293] A month later he recommended Turchin, Hazen, and Stanley for promotion, saying, "All three of these officers are distinguished as tacticians and disciplinarians."[294] But Brown's Ferry was only a preliminary move. As one of Thomas' aides put it, "It was as fine a thing as was ever done. Genl Smith Chief Engineer planned it, and Genls Tuchin [sic] and Hazen commanded the troops. So far so so good."[295]

"One of the Most Startling Episodes of the War"

Grant and Thomas, their supply problem more or less solved, now turned to consider the more basic task of driving Bragg away from Chattanooga. Bragg helped out immeasurably by sending Longstreet's Corps eastward to look

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[293] Chattanooga, 11:30 P. M., Ibid., 40.

[294] Thomas to Brigadier-General Lorenzo Thomas [no relation], U. S. Adjutant-General, Chattanooga, November 20, 1863, Ibid., Pt. 3, 201.

[295] Alfred Lacy Hough, Soldier in the West--The Civil War Letters of Alfred Lacy Hough, ed. Robert G. Athearn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), p. 162.

bumbling Burnside in Knoxville. (Yes, Burnside was still in Knoxville.) Grant, who had arrived in Chattanooga just before Brown's Ferry, and Thomas were still waiting for Sherman who was way overdue, laboriously working his way across Northern Alabama. The plan they agreed on had been drawn up by Baldy Smith and was to be executed as soon as Sherman's force arrived. By its provisions Sherman was to make the main offensive thrust at the right end of Bragg's defensive line on Missionary Ridge while Hooker assaulted Lookout Mountain on the other end with the XII Corps. The rest of Thomas' army was to hold Bragg along his front between the flank attacks. Howard was to have his corps in position to support either Sherman or Thomas, as circumstances dictated.[296]

When Sherman's troops finally arrived, Chattanooga contained soldiers from the three major Union armies, and they didn't get along too well. The men of the Army of Tennessee were very informally attired and looked not at all like soldiers, while Hooker's soldiers were carefully dressed and drilled, and the contrast in appearance and attitude led to considerable bad feeling. To the Potomacs the Tennessee soldiers were "tramps," and Sherman's shabby-looking fellows returned the compliment with "dudes" and

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[296]McKinney, pp. 281-82.

"brass-mounted soldiers." In the middle were the men of the Army of the Cumberland, who were a blend of both armies. They were less tightly controlled and perfectly clothed than Hooker's men, but Buell and Rosecrans had seen to it that they were thoroughly trained and made to understand the importance of discipline. The real problem of the Cumberlands was one of morale. It was painfully obvious to them, and the soldiers of the Tennessee and the Potomac took extra trouble to tell them so, that the reenforcements had been brought in to bail them out of their situation; and they were not at all happy about it. Then when they found out that theirs was to be a secondary role in the coming battle, they felt even worse.[297]

Operations began when on November 23 Thomas sent out the divisions of Wood, Sheridan, Johnson, and Baird to make a strong reconnaissance of Bragg's center. They did better than that, capturing the Confederate advance lines and driving the Rebels from the advanced strong point of Orchard Nob. At four o'clock in the afternoon with Turchin on the extreme right the Union force began to dig in to secure its gains. In front of it was Missionary Ridge and the main Confederate defensive positions. At the foot of the ridge was a line of rifle pits and gun emplacements, and at the top was another thoroughly entrenched and fortified line.

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[297] Ibid., pp. 282-83.

Missionary Ridge ran in a roughly southwest-northeast direction in front of Chattanooga, and it was going to take some doing to drive the Confederates off of it. One of the reasons Bragg detached Longstreet was because he thought his position on it impregnable. Grant agreed, and that was why he was going to attack the flanks rather than the impossible center of the Rebel line.[298]

Next day Hooker attacked and took the western side of Lookout Mountain and moved a short distance around the eastern side. This move secured the Federal supply line to the west once and for all. The same day Sherman, whose forces had finally come up and had been moved to a concealed camp north of Chattanooga, crossed the Tennessee River to his position. On the morning of the following day, November 25, he attacked the north end of Missionary Ridge, while Hooker moved southward along the eastern face of Lookout. By sunset Hooker was well on toward Rossville. But Sherman's attack ran into the crack Confederate division of General Patrick Claiburne in strong defensive works, and throughout the day Claiburne's men had all the best of the encounter. By three in the afternoon Sherman had committed all his reserves and was still hung up with Claiburne. Grant's main

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[298] Ibid., pp. 285-86, 288-89; O. R., XXXI, Pt. 2, 507, 512.

thrust had clearly failed.[299]

Grant's headquarters this day was on Orchard Nob, and besides him Thomas, Granger, and Wood and their staffs were with him waiting for news from Sherman. Also present was Montgomery Meigs, U. S. Quartermaster-General. As the news began to come in, all of it bad, tension started to build up on Orchard Nob. Everyone became cranky and irritable, except perhaps Thomas. In the afternoon as it became clear that Sherman had made no headway, a sour cloud settled over the people on Orchard Nob. Granger became so nervous that he ran over to a nearby artillery piece and helped its crew fire it. Grant was apparently paralyzed by the failure of his plan. The only move open to him, unless he pulled Sherman back across the river, was to send Thomas' troops forward against Missionary Ridge to relieve some of the pressure on the left. But for some reason he hesitated to do this, and it wasn't until, prodded by his chief-of-staff, he said sharply to Thomas, "General Thomas, order Granger to turn that battery over to its proper commander and take command of his own corps." Then--"And now order your troops to advance and take the enemy's first line of rifle pits."[300] Thomas waved Granger over and talked with him briefly, Grant listening; then Granger walked over to Wood and ordered him

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[299]McKinney, pp. 289-92. [300]Ibid., p. 294.

to send his division forward to take the line of rifle pits at the bottom of the ridge. Similar orders were sent to Sheridan, Johnson, and Baird.[301]

In the taking of Orchard Nob Turchin was once again at the extreme right end of a Federal line. Again he moved his brigade to the left flank, but this time in more happy circumstances. At eleven in the morning of the twenty-fifth Baird was ordered to march his division around to the left to assist the hard-pressed Sherman. He moved his command northward, then along the river until he reached the rear of Sherman's position. At just that time a messenger arrived with orders for Baird to turn to the right and move to close up on the left of the line facing Missionary Ridge.[302] Baird said, "Owing to the difficult character of the ground, intersected by streams, marshes, and thickets, it was some time before I could reach the spot and get the division into position."[303] Baird's right as he faced the ridge, Turchin's brigade, now touched General Sam Beatty's (not to be confused with John Beatty) left brigade of Wood's division, a short distance north of Orchard Nob. Next to Turchin on the left was Van Derveer, and on the other side of Van Derveer was Phelps.[304]

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[301] Ibid.; O. R., XXXI, Pt. 2, 257.

[302] Ibid., 508, 512 [303] Ibid., 508. [304] Ibid.

Somewhat later an aide of Thomas brought verbal orders to Baird to move forward to the edge of the woods bordering the open field that ran to the base of the ridge. As Baird described it in his report,

> he [the staff officer] added, this was intended as preparatory to a general assault on the mountain, and that it doubtless was designed by the major-general commanding that I should take part in this movement, so that I would be following his wishes were I to push on to the summit.[305]

R. W. Johnson also thought that the ridge was the objective, but Wood and Sheridan understood that the orders were to halt at the rifle pits at the foot of the ridge.[306] Wood, who had been on Orchard Nob with Grant and Thomas, wrote his interpretation in his report:

> To lessen the opposition General Sherman was encountering, it was determined that a movement should be made against the rebel center. I was ordered to advance and carry the enemy's intrenchments at the base of Mission Ridge, and hold them.[307]

Grant it is clear still considered Sherman's the main attack. Thomas' move was intended to force Bragg to draw troops from his right in front of Sherman. Grant thought the crest of the ridge impregnable, and reenforcements which Grant hoped Bragg would bring from his right would make it doubly so. This made what now happened all the more incredible.

A few minutes after three o'clock six guns on Orchard Nob boomed in rapid succession: the signal for Thomas' men

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[305] Ibid. [306] Ibid., 188-89 [307] Ibid., 257-58.

to move out. From right to left Johnson, Sheridan, and Wood advanced across the field. Baird had given his attack orders to Phelps on the left and was in the process of doing the same to Van Derveer when he heard the guns of Orchard Nob. He galloped over to Turchin's position and saw Wood's men running forward. Quickly he told Turchin to push forward and take the rifle pits, "then conforming his movements to those of the troops on his right, to endeavor to gain the summit of the mountain along with them."[308] The last of Thomas' attack brigades thus got underway.

As he rode along his line to order his troops forward Turchin noticed that some of Sheridan's men were already climbing the ridge. The brigade as it began to advance was formed in two lines, the first consisting of, from right to left, the Eleventh, Thirty-Sixth, and Ninety-Second Ohio. The line was actually five columns close together but covering a front wide enough to back up the first: the Seventeenth Ohio was on the right in two columns; the Thirty-First was in the center also in two columns; and on the left were the Eighty-Second Indiana and Eighty-Ninth Ohio, two short regiments formed in one column. Turchin's men had about one and a quarter miles to cover, most of it open ground. Before he moved out into the clearing, Turchin halted and surveyed the

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[308]Baird, Ibid., 508.

situation ahead. Confederate batteries to the left and right on the crest of the ridge were trained on the ground he had to cover, as were a large number of rifles at the base and on the crest of the ridge.[309] Seeing Sam Beatty's brigade on his right and Van Derveer's on the left capture and jump into the rifle pits at the base of the ridge, Turchin made a crucial decision: "I decided to cross the clearing at the double-quick."[310] As much as anything this decision was prompted by the competitive spirit that pervaded the troops which had fought at Chickamauga. It seemed to them that they had a stain to erase from their history. The last thing Turchin wanted was to have his brigade be the last one up the ridge. Besides, with the deadly fire sweeping the ground, quick movement was the safest.

Now Turchin's brigade, a late starter, entered the race for the ridge. With a cheer the men ran out across the field, and now the Rebels on top and bottom opened fire. A few men fell, but the rest rushed on, shouting no longer for every breath was needed to keep up the pace. Turchin was at the head of his men today--if ever his inspirational presence was needed it was now. They reached the Rebel works at the foot of the ridge, and looking around Turchin saw that some

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[309] O. R., XXXI, Pt. 2, 512, 517.

[310] Ibid., 513.

of the men, as spent as last year's bonus, were ducking down into the rifle pits to regain their breath.

> Knowing that men dropping down under fire are very slow to get up, and start again, I urged my regiments on, and they again rushed forward and commenced to climb the hill, some of the flank regiments running over the heads of General Beatty's and Colonel VanDerveer's men lying in the rifle pits on my right and left.[311]

On Orchard Nob the brass anxiously watched the progress of Thomas' men. Grant looked harder as Sheridan's and Turchin's men began to scale the ridge. Fuming, he turned to Thomas and demanded sharply, "Thomas, who ordered those men up the ridge?"

Thomas quietly answered, "I don't know."

"Did you order them up, Granger?" Grant now asked.

"No"--but "When those fellows get started all hell can't stop them."

This was no satisfaction at all, and Grant said something to the effect that someone would suffer if the attack failed.[312]

Back on Thomas' left Baird was suffering. He noted with satisfaction that Turchin was well on his way up the ridge, but glancing to the right he saw that Wood's troops had halted at the rifle pits, leaving Turchin unsupported on the right. Baird's two left brigades had also halted

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[311] Ibid. [312] McKinney, p. 296.

and thus Turchin was unsupported on both his flanks. Baird wrote, "I was in the act of starting forward my other two brigades for this purpose [to support Turchin] when I received orders not to permit my men to go farther, and not to permit them to become engaged."[313] Horrible possibilities must have flashed through Baird's mind--Turchin isolated and rolled down the hill in a bloody repulse, a court of inquiry . . . "I was at this [order] much perplexed as to how I should withdraw General Turchin. It was only, however," he noted with relief, "momentary, as another order came in less than three minutes for the whole line to charge to the top."[314]

Turchin's men stormed the crest of the ridge and took it, followed by other brigades on the left and right. Then followed scenes which were repeated all along the line. The Federals spread out along the ridge driving the Rebels to wild flight. In a few places the Confederates stood and fought, and bloody hand-to-hand conflicts ensued. But mostly they ran, abandoning many cannon, or surrendered. By dusk the overwhelming tide of the Federal assault had swept the enemy off the ridge entirely. Covered by Claiburne's stout men, Bragg retired his shattered army southward out of further harm's way.[315]

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[313] O. R., XXXI, Pt. 2, 509 [314] Ibid.

[315] Ibid., 513, 515, 517, 519-23, 526.

As darkness fell Turchin counted his casualties, which were amazingly light. The highest number suffered by any of his regiments was fifty-eight by the Ninety-Second Ohio. His total loss for the day's action was two hundred and eighty-four. He also had some trophies to count: seven enemy cannon and two flags. In their haste to press on, his men had left many of the guns to be possessed by other Federal troops who came up after them. He explained,

> The fact was that, reaching the top of the hill, we had more serious work to perform than to count and guard cannon. The enemy was in strong force on our left, and, until the Second and Third Brigades climbed the hills assigned to them, all our energies were directed to fighting the enemy, and not to grouping and displaying systematically the captured cannon.[316]

The residue of competitive feeling which had contributed so much to the success of the assault on the hill now led many regiments to claim credit for capturing more guns than was physically possible.

On Orchard Nob observers were thrilled by the great charge. What had started as a limited attack to get Sherman off the hook had before their eyes turned into an overwhelming victory without any possible parallel. According to one observer Grant hurried from Orchard Nob to see that Turchin was secure from an attack on his left. Old Meigs was with him trying to prepare friction primers for some of the

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[316] Ibid., 514.

captured guns, "but got so excited over the great victory gained that he gave the task up in despair."[317] A newspaper reporter was on Orchard Nob during the day and when he came to describe the incredible upward assault he really let himself go. "And now," he wrote, "you have before you one of the most startling episodes of the war; I cannot render it in words; dictionaries are such beggarly things. But . . ."--but he did somehow manage to marshal some words into a description of the assault.[318]

The leaders of the assault were of course roundly praised from all sides. But Turchin himself paid tribute to his men, and by implication all the American boys who had served under him, in his official report. "The gallantry of the officers and men of my brigade," he wrote, "during the assault on Mission Ridge, cannot be surpassed. They showed a nerve and bravery that can dare any danger."[319] And then he continued,

> It is a pity that the general-in-chief of the army has no right to promote officers and men for bravery on the battle-field. Lieutenant-Colonels Putnam, Devol, Street, and Lister should be made colonels for their gallantry. Many others, officers, sar-

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[317] Shanks, p. 119.

[318] Susanne Colton Wilson, Column South: With the Fifteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry . . . ed. J. Ferrell Colton & Antoinette G. Smith (Flagstaff, Arizona: J. F. Colton & Co., 1960), p. 126.

[319] O. R., XXXI, Pt. 2, 514.

> geants [sic], and privates should be promoted. The men, those who may be called the leaders in every fight, have nothing to show that they are better than others--no national medal, no wreath, no badge, nothing at all.[320]

Years later when such a medal was established, three of Turchin's men received it for their conduct at Missionary Ridge: Sergeant James B. Bell, Company H, Eleventh Ohio; Corporal George Green, Company H, Eleventh Ohio; and Private James C. Walker, Company K, Thirty-First Ohio. The award was the Congressional Medal of Honor.[321]

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[320] Ibid., 516.

[321] Fairfax Downey, Storming of the Gateway: Chattanooga, 1863 (New York: David McKay Co., 1960), pp. 229-31.

CHAPTER VII

GEORGIA AND OUT

Turchin participated in Grant's and later Sherman's campaign for possession of Atlanta until illness forced him to resign from the army. The Georgia heat beat him in the summer of 1864. On July 15 he had to take a leave of absence because as his brigade surgeon described it, "he is particularly susceptible to solar influences, producing violent pain in the head, approaching coup de soleil [sun-stroke], and . . . said tendency is much heightened by his continuance in this climate."[322] When his health did not improve, he resigned on October 15. Turchin was born in the hot flatlands of the Ukraine and it is probable that it was there as a child that he picked up this weakness to the sun which now drove him from the service. After the war it prevented him from leading the kind of active life that he would have wished to, and eventually it effected his mind and led to his death. It was a sad ending to a career which seemed to be just picking up speed.

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[322]"Turchin's Military History," p. 4.

It is hardly necessary to sum up Turchin's Civil War career in detail. By his kindness, his unquenchable spirit, his general concern for their welfare, he gained their affection. And, except in his sojourn with the cavalry, his expert handling of them on the march and in the field earned their respect. Absalom Baird summed him up very well when he left the division in July of 1864:

> Brig. Gen. J. B. Turchin, one of the most thoroughly educated and scientific soldiers in the country, and a more devoted patriot than most of those born on our soil, commanded the First Brigade with distinguished ability during the first half of the campaign.[323]

And speaking for a later generation Glenn Tucker wrote,

> The Federal General Turchin, as has been pointed out, was a competent critic as well as a capable soldier. Perhaps of all the heroic and omnipresent brigades of the Federal army, his vied with VanDerveer's and Wilder's among those outstanding. . . . Turchin of all the Federal brigade officers seemed to keep about the closest check on the progress of the battle.[324]

Tucker was speaking of Turchin at Chickamauga, but his description fits for Turchin generally. Personally he did not have quite the success to which his talents entitled him, but his country certainly benefited from his service on its behalf. To him this was perhaps reward enough.

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[323] O. R., XXXVIII, Pt. 1, 755.

[324] Tucker, pp. 337-38.

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